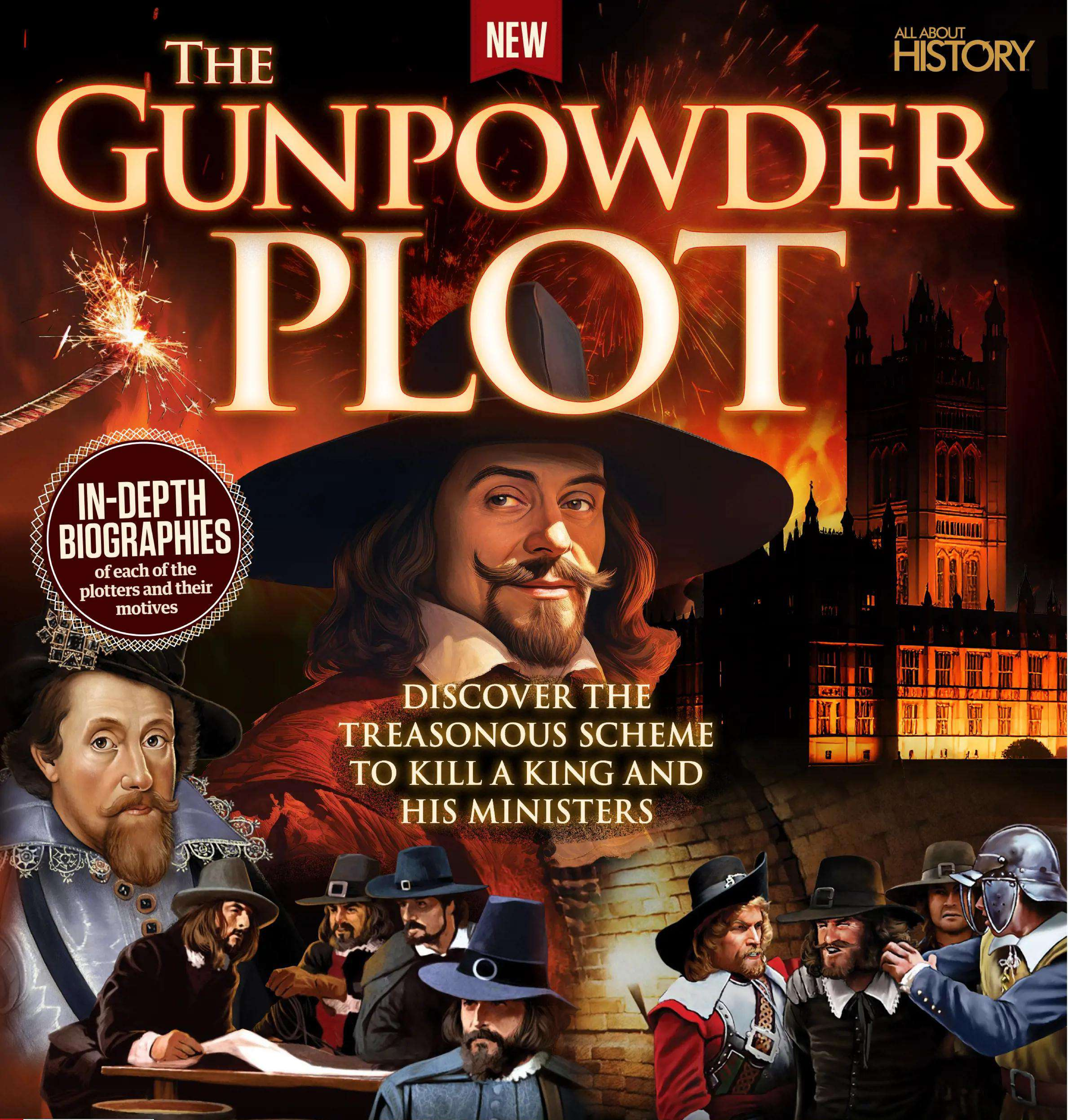
NEW

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

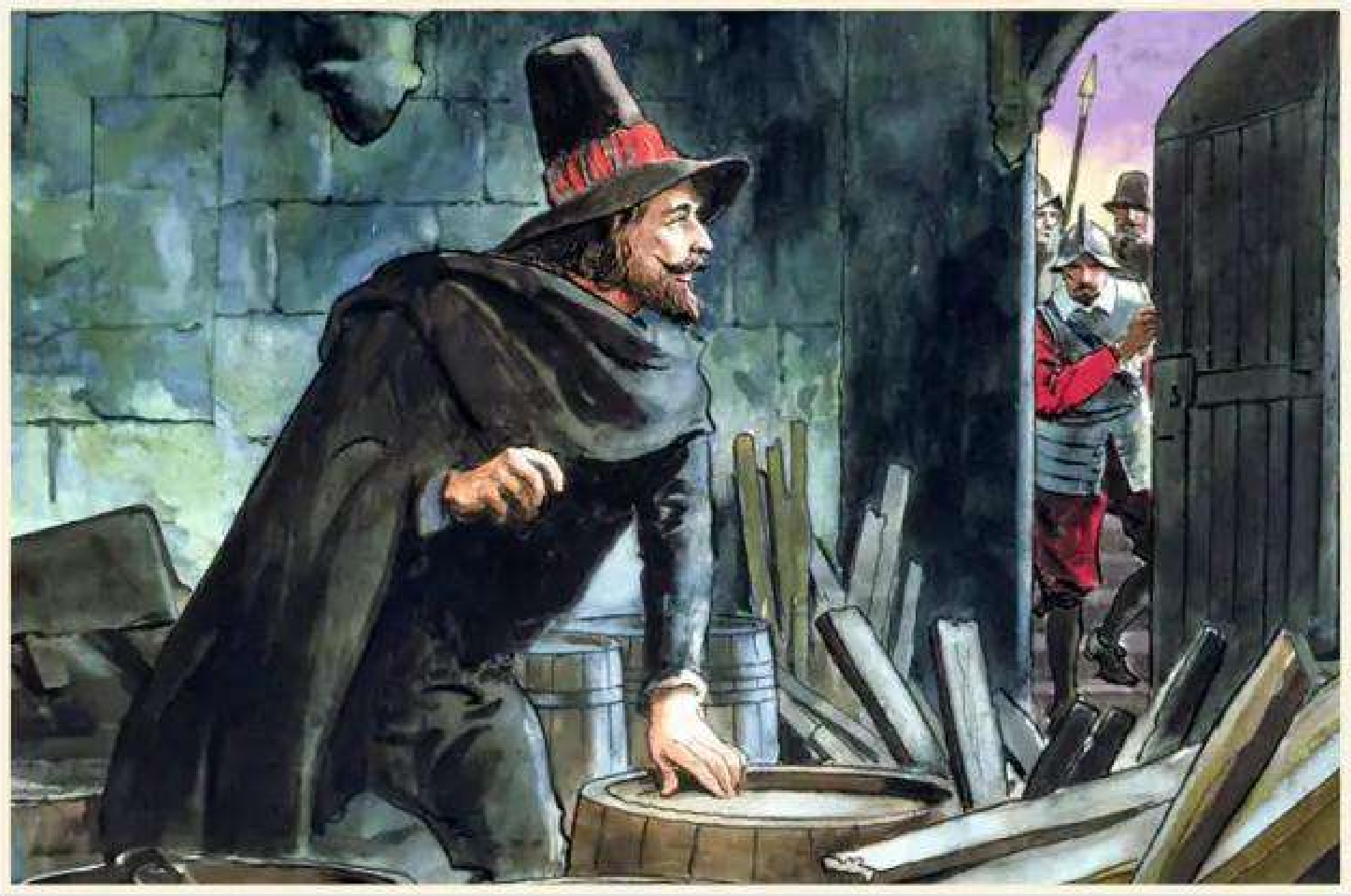


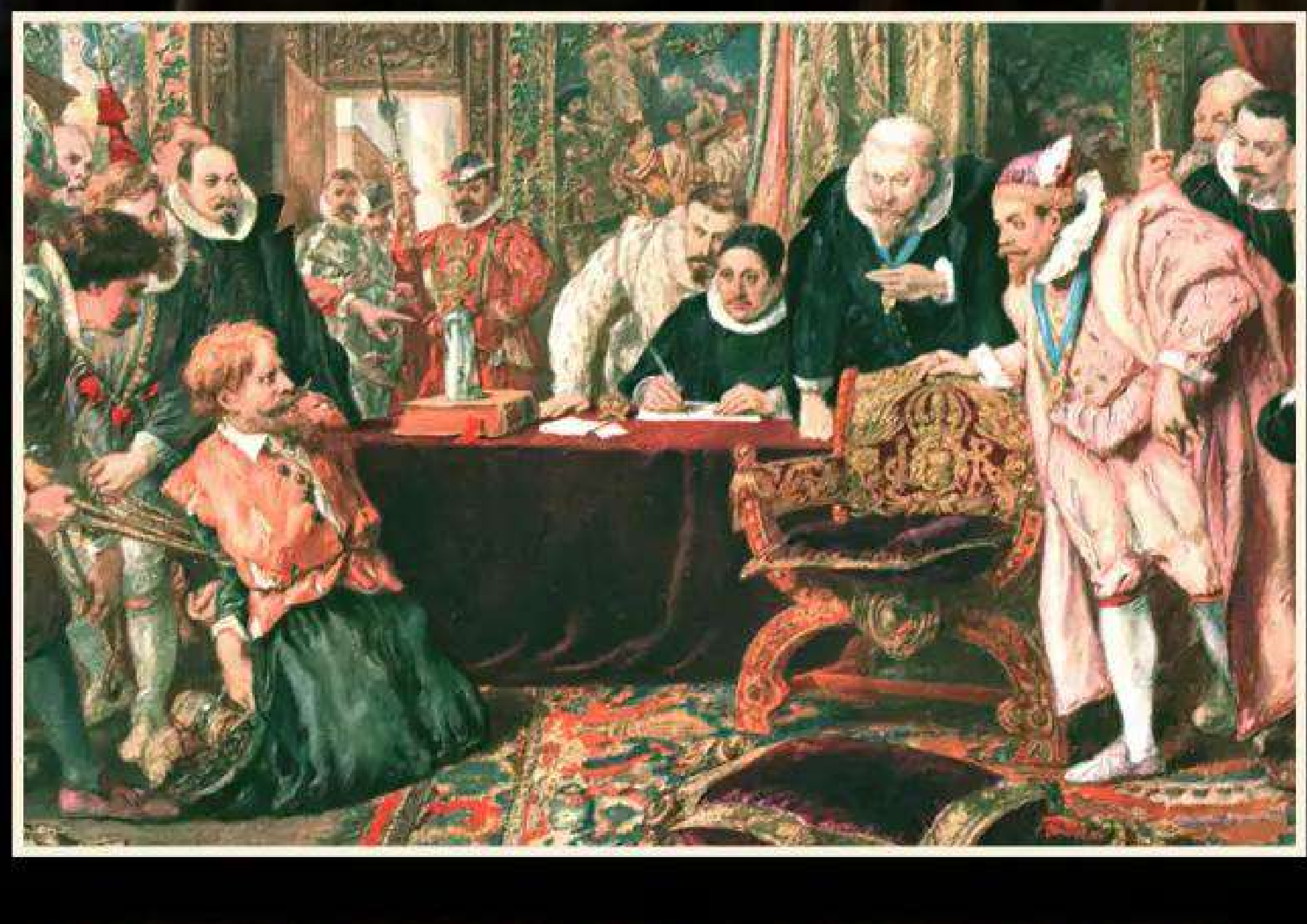
IN-DEPTH BIOGRAPHIES
of each of the plotters and their motives

DISCOVER THE TREASONOUS SCHEME TO KILL A KING AND HIS MINISTERS

Digital Edition

Wright
John Wright
Thomas Percy
Guido Fawkes
Robert Catesby





RELIGIOUS WAR ✸ A DEADLY PLAN ✸ HERESY & MURDER

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION

When we think of the Gunpowder Plot, one name comes instantly to mind: Guy Fawkes. But he had twelve co-conspirators, and wasn't even the ringleader of the plan or the man behind its inception. The Gunpowder Plot runs much deeper than the actions of one man lurking beneath England's Houses of Parliament with powder and a slow match and the aim of killing King James. It's a tale that starts generations beforehand in the reign of Henry VIII, and takes in the Reformation that transformed the religious landscape of Europe, the succession crises that were brought about by Henry's lack of a male heir who survived long enough to marry, and the persecution of the Catholic faithful as Henry's warring children each sought to use the conflict between Rome and the Church of England to legitimise their place on the throne and wrest control of the state. It's the tale of the fretful Scottish king who succeeded them, the impossible task he was faced with, and of a country at war with itself. And it ends, as all plots of this nature do, in blood and ruin...

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

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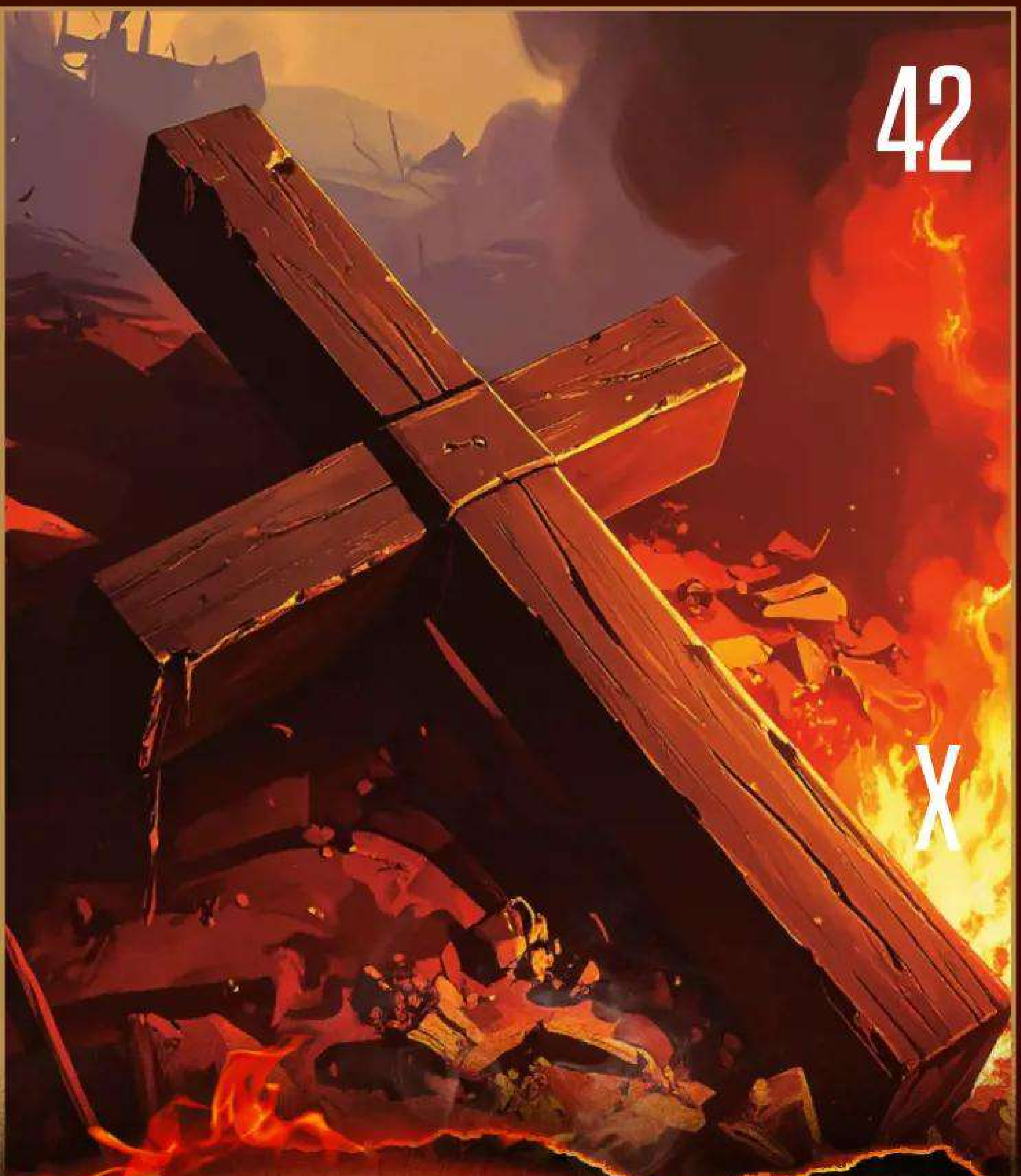

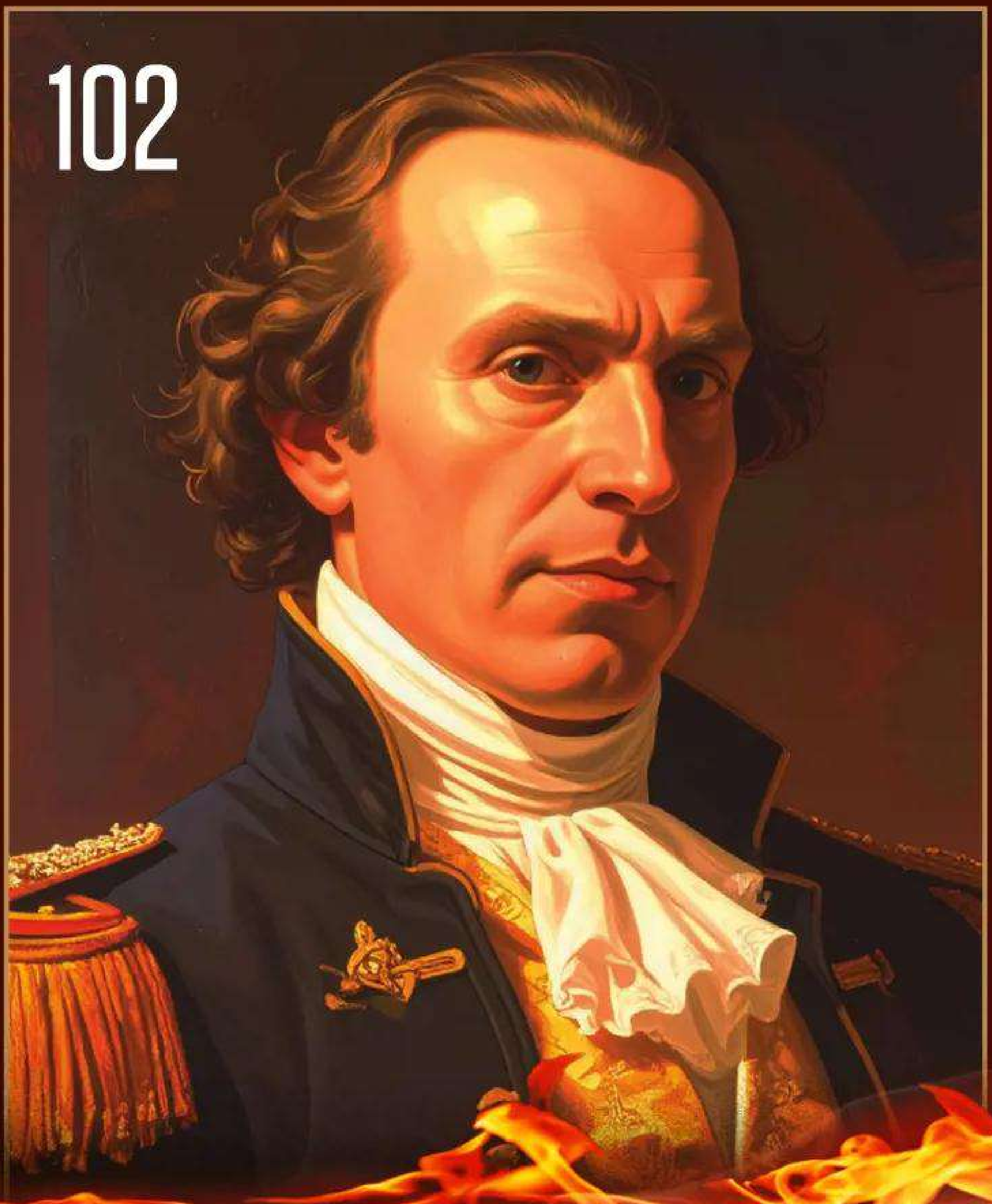

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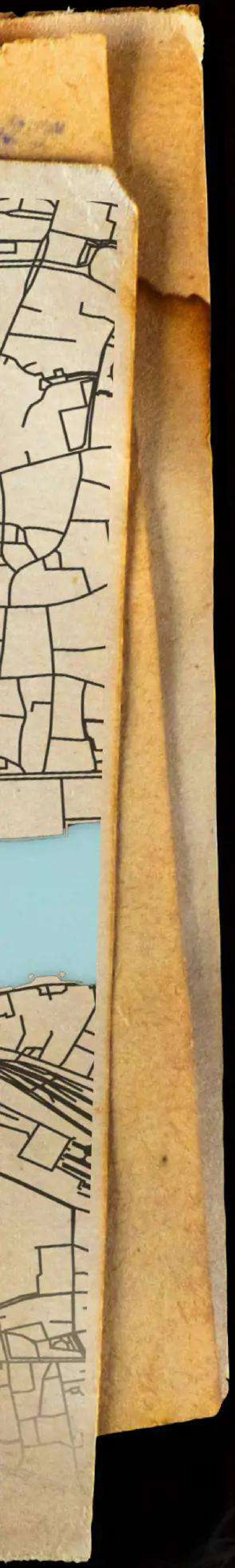
London, England.,
5th November 1605



THE PLAN

Whereas His Majesty King James has declared that we of the Catholic faith are to be criminalised and persecuted, in contravention of the promises he made to us upon his ascension to the throne, and whereas he enriches himself and his fellow heretics by extorting from us an unjust tax upon our true faith, we declare that His Majesty is a tyrant and his Parliament a place of connivance and mischief, which therefore must be purged from the face of our good country in fire and ruin.

Thus, when the great and terrible deed is done, shall we inspire the common folk of the land to rise up with us, overthrow the last vestiges of the King and his lords' tyranny, and reclaim their Mother Church, her liturgy, blessed saints, and holy days, that men's souls shall be ruled by Our Lord and His chosen shepherd in Rome, and not by a man of mere temporal power.

Further, in place of her unjust father we shall place on the throne the Princess Elizabeth, who though of tender years, it is hoped can be guided by such men of sound judgement and noble purpose as are here present in this endeavour, to come to rule us fitly as Queen, and perchance in the fullness of time to be joined in holy matrimony with some prince of the true faith among our allies of Spain or France.

This we swear in the name of England and of Christ, and we pray that God will forgive us and have mercy on our souls for the dark deeds we must perforce commit in His holy name to free His chosen disciples from persecution.

Guy Fawkes was implicated in the Gunpowder Plot

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

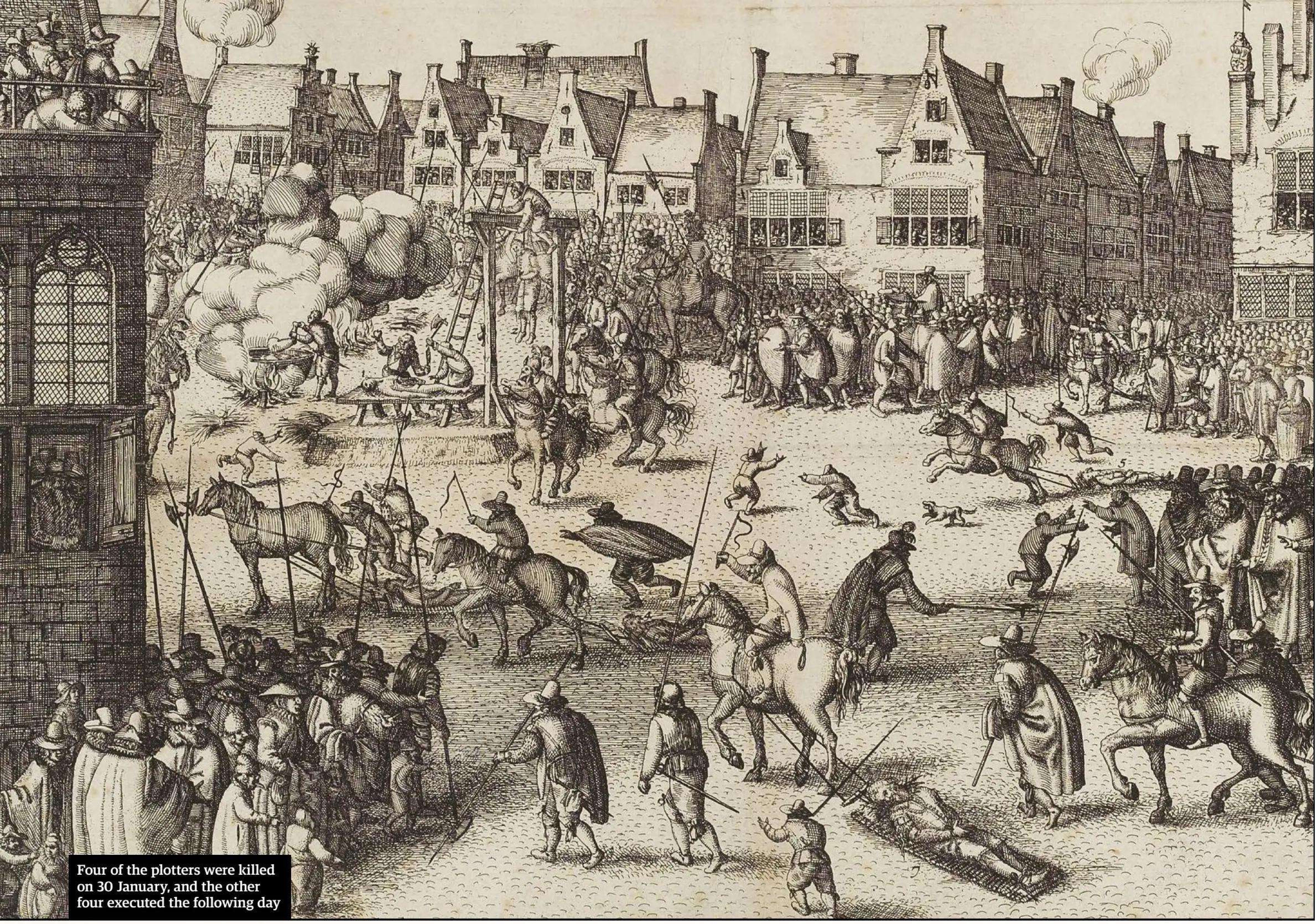
Everyone remembers the fifth of November, but the true story of the men who plotted the gunpowder treason often remains forgotten

When Queen Elizabeth I drew her last breath on her mammoth 44-year-long reign, Catholics around England let out their own sighs of relief. Life under Elizabeth had not been easy. Perhaps in retaliation to the brutal rule of her sister Mary, the devout Catholic queen, Elizabeth had introduced a range of legislations that hit Catholics hard. She was likely fearful of Catholics, and she had reason to be, as a Papal Bull declared that a Catholic's allegiance was not to the Crown, but to God. In one swift move, every Catholic in England was branded a traitor. Simply being a Catholic, or even sheltering Catholics, was not only illegal but akin to high treason. Terrified, but devoted to their faith, Catholics were forced underground and some 130 priests were executed. As the queen aged, many of the people who had suffered most under her reign began to hope for a successor who would be more sympathetic to their plight.

Considering how much was at stake, the crown passed to its next bearer incredibly smoothly. James I was the great-great-grandson of Henry VII, and although he was a Protestant, his mother had been a devout Catholic. For the struggling Catholics, King James' early acts to relax the fines that they suffered were very encouraging. However, this joy quickly turned sour. Realising how the fines filled up the treasury, James reinstalled them and openly damned the Catholic faith. The hopes of many Catholics were crushed, and for some, this was the final straw.

If one man had felt the bitter sting of anti-Catholicism in England, it was Robert Catesby. A man from an illustrious family line that stretched back to William Catesby, trusted adviser of Richard III, his entire life he had watched his family's wealth be chipped away by harsh fines. When Catesby was only eight years old, he witnessed his father arrested and tried for harbouring a priest. For the remainder of his young years, his father was constantly in and out of prison. Catesby was tall, handsome and gifted, but he had been forced to drop out of his studies, as obtaining his degree required him to take the oath of supremacy, which swore allegiance to the queen and the Church of England. The Protestant monarchy had taken everything in Catesby's life: his childhood, his father, his fortune and his future.

Catesby possessed not only good looks, but also a generous and affable nature, and as a result, he had amassed a large and powerful circle of friends. His allegiance to the Catholic faith was no secret,



Four of the plotters were killed on 30 January, and the other four executed the following day

Catholic Crime & Punishment

Life for Catholics was anything but easy under the Protestant monarchs

Crime	Punishment
Not attending Anglican service	Initially fined 12 shillings, then raised to £20 per month
Attending a private Catholic mass	Imprisonment
Not paying fines	Imprisonment
Fleeing abroad for longer than six months without permission	Forfeit the profits of lands and all goods
Being a Catholic priest	Death
Refusing to accept the monarch as head of the Church	Imprisonment and death
Reconciling any person to the Catholic church	Death

and he had taken part in a previous rebellion. When Queen Elizabeth fell ill in 1596, Catesby was arrested simply because the government feared that he would take advantage of the situation and organise an uprising. Catesby's experiences typified the lives of all Catholics of the time; he was the beating heart of the Catholic struggle, and he was rich and influential enough to actually do something about it.

Catesby had a plan. Killing the king was not enough; Elizabeth's demise had proved that the death of a monarch by itself did not ensure change: much more was needed in order to turn the tide. The status quo was against him, so the status quo needed to change. To do this, he would blast it to smithereens. In February 1604, Catesby invited Thomas Wintour and John Wright to his house. Wintour, Catesby's cousin, had also felt the sting of anti-Catholicism as his own uncle had been executed for being a priest. Wright was an old friend of Catesby's and had taken part in a rebellion against Elizabeth. In his house in Lambeth, Catesby revealed his grand plan – he would re-establish Catholicism by blowing up the House of Lords during the opening of Parliament. Not only would the king be present, but also the most powerful Protestants in the land. The attack would produce a power vacuum, and the Catholics would be poised and ready to fill it.

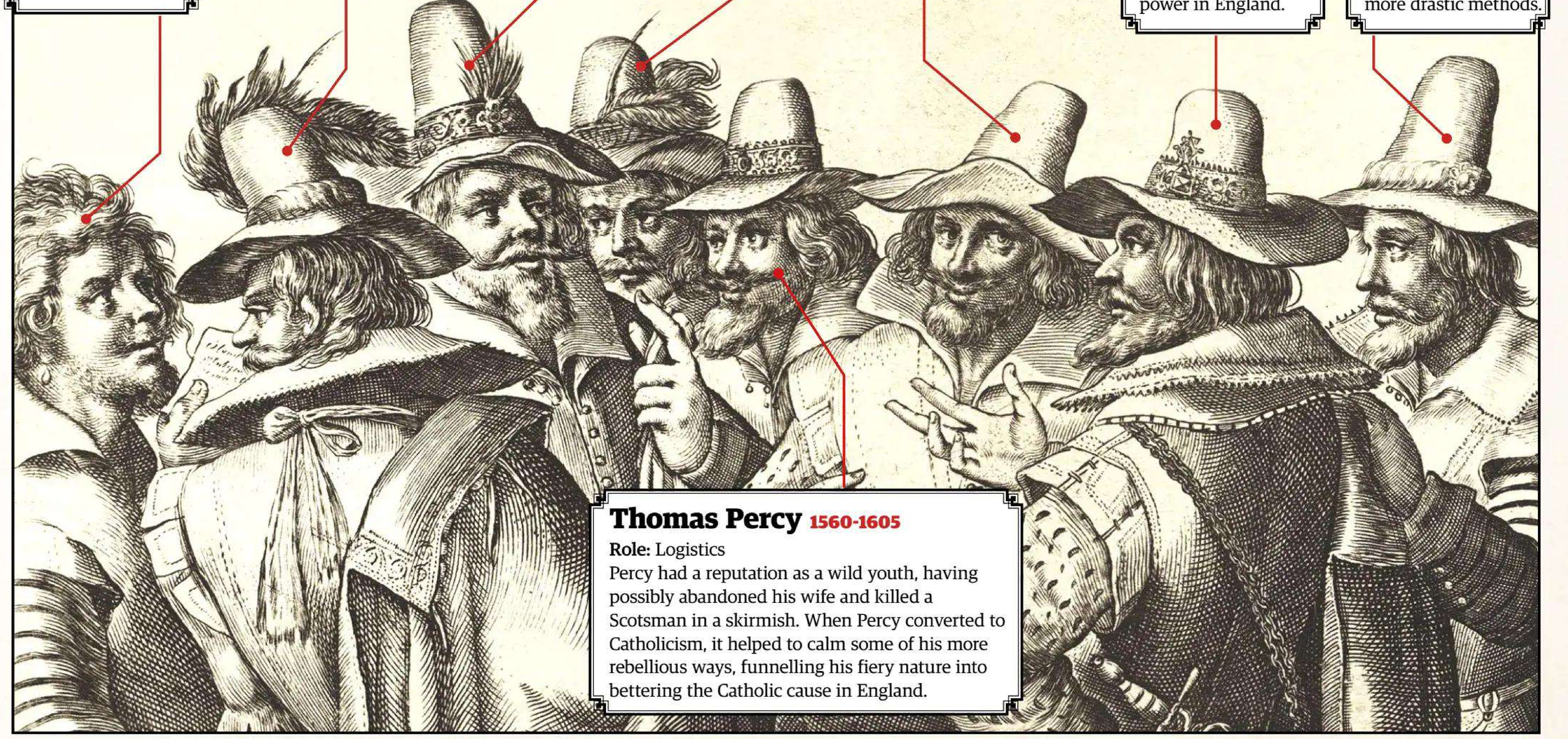
Understandably, Wintour was shocked by his cousin's plans. He was quick to argue that, should they fail, it would put back their cause several years. Catesby responded: "The nature of the disease requires so sharp a remedy." He launched into an impassioned speech about the righteousness of his cause, and how Parliament was the perfect target as "in that place they have done us all the mischief." Catesby's natural charisma quickly won around his cousin, who pledged his loyalty and life to the impassioned leader. Catesby had recruited his first co-conspirators, and more were to follow. Seeking support from the Catholic Spain, Wintour travelled to Flanders. Although he struggled to obtain Spanish support, while there he sought out the man who was fated to become the face of the gunpowder plot – Guy Fawkes. Fawkes had made his Catholic allegiance very clear by fighting on the side of Spain during the Eighty Years' War and had been attempting to drum up support in the country. He was tall, well built with a mop of thick red-brown hair, and he was also determined, driven and skilled in all matters of war. However, there was one of Fawkes' talents that attracted Catesby in particular – his proficiency and knowledge of gunpowder.

When the men met again at the Duck and Drake Inn, they had drafted another conspirator, Thomas Percy, a dear friend of Catesby's. Percy had a reputation as a wild and rebellious youth. He had attempted to build a strong relationship with James I for the good of his religion, but now felt the bitter sting of betrayal. Percy, on a previous occasion, had to be stopped by Catesby from storming into the palace and taking down the king single handedly. Together, these five passionate and wronged men met in the Catholic safe house and Catesby outlined the plan. Percy's support was almost a given, and he proclaimed: "Shall we always, gentlemen, talk and never do anything?" Swayed either by their enigmatic leader or their own hatred of Protestants, the five men swore an oath of secrecy upon a bible and received the Holy Communion from a priest secretly celebrating mass, completely unaware that the men were planning regicide.

> *"The status quo needed to change. To do this, he would blast it to smithereens"*

With his first co-conspirators in place, Catesby sprung into action. The opening of Parliament had been postponed until 5 November the following year due to plague. This gave him plenty of time to prepare everything. Initially, Catesby figured the best way to get the gunpowder beneath the House of Lords would be to dig a tunnel, but the men soon realised a far safer way was to lease one of the storerooms that lay beneath. Luckily, Percy had a business in London, so could easily lease a storeroom without attracting suspicion. Explosives expert Guy Fawkes posed as John Johnson, Percy's servant, and was placed in the premises. The conspirators stored the gunpowder in Catesby's house and gradually ferried it across the Thames into the dwelling under the cover of darkness.

Steadily, more and more men were drafted into the conspiracy, as it proved impossible for five men alone to handle such grand plans. Catesby's servant, Bates, became suspicious, and his master had no option but to recruit him. Robert Keyes, Robert Wintour, John Grant and Christopher



Thomas Bates 1567-1606
Role: Catesby's servant
Born in Warwickshire, Bates was employed as Catesby's servant and was seen as a hard-working and loyal man. Due to his close proximity to Catesby, he became suspicious of his unusual activity and was invited into the plot. He became a useful accomplice – as an ordinary man he could perform many actions without arousing suspicion.

Robert Wintour 1568-1606
Role: Financial support
The oldest Wintour brother, Robert inherited the majority of his father's estate, including Huddington Court. Through marriage, Robert aligned himself to a strong Catholic family, and his home became a refuge for priests.

Christopher Wright 1570-1605
Role: Conspirator
The younger of the Wright brothers, Christopher was described as taller, fatter and fairer than John. A private and discreet man, since his conversion he was fully committed to the Catholic faith, and took part in the same rebellion as his brother and Catesby.

John Wright 1568-1605
Role: Original conspirator
The older of the two Wright brothers, John was a school friend of Guy Fawkes and was thrown in prison for taking part in rebellions. With a reputation as a brave, loyal and skilled swordsman, he converted to Catholicism and became associated with Catesby.

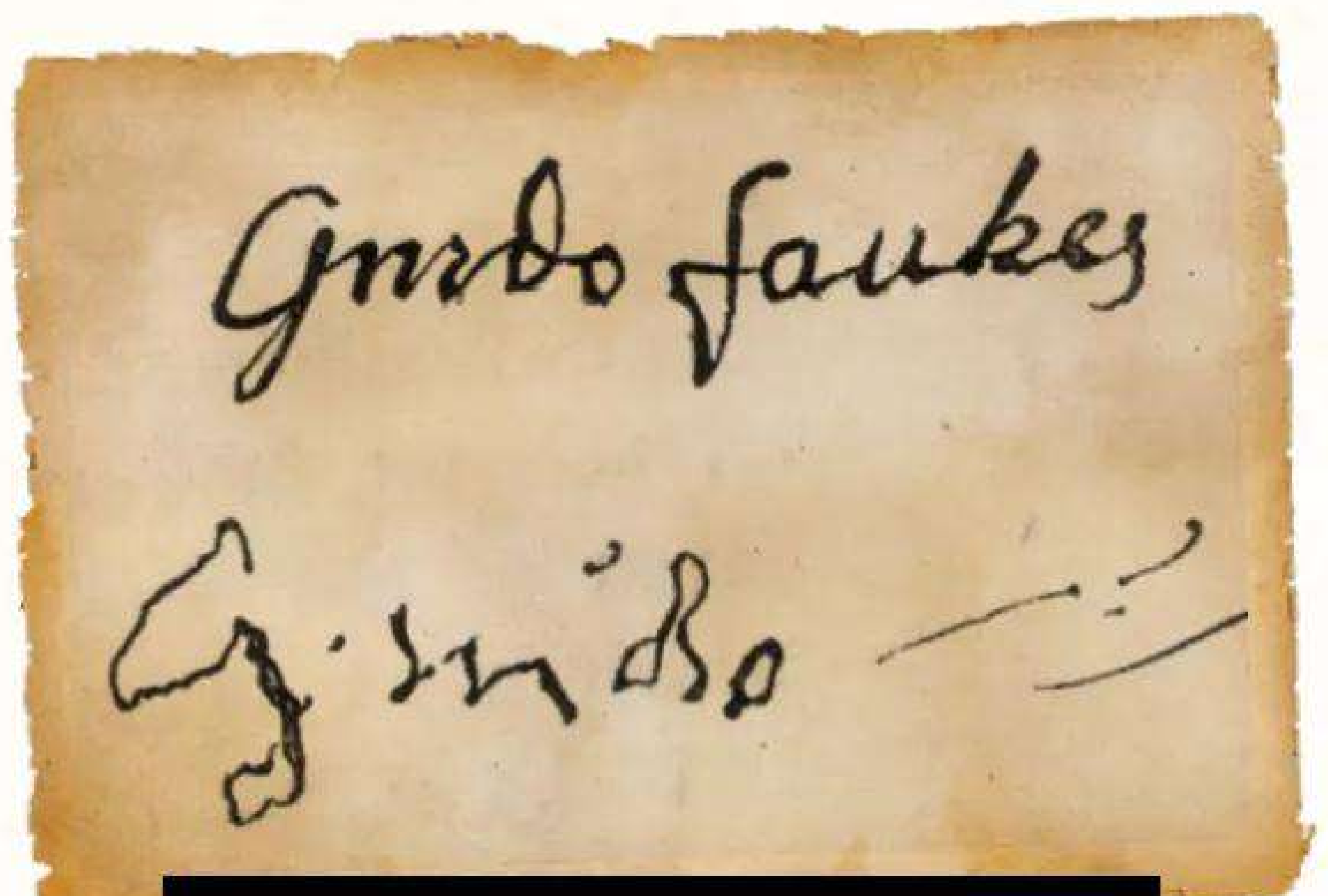
Guy Fawkes 1570-1606
Role: Explosives expert
Born in York, Fawkes lost his father at a young age, and when his mother married a Catholic, he converted to the faith. He fought for Spain in the Eighty Years' War, and adopted the Italian form of his name 'Guido'. He was furiously opposed to James I, describing him and all of Scotland as heretics.

Robert Catesby 1573-1605
Role: Leader
The only surviving son of Sir William Catesby, Robert Catesby gained a reputation as a Catholic sympathiser after taking part in a rebellion in hopes of usurping the queen. Desperate to reclaim Catholic power, Catesby concocted a plot that would require the co-operation of only a few trusted men but was capable of destroying Protestant power in England.

Thomas Wintour 1571-1606
Role: Original co-conspirator
Thomas Wintour was intelligent, witty and well educated. He fought against Catholic Spain, but his views quickly changed and he became a faithful Catholic. Thomas travelled to Spain in an attempt to drum up support, also known as the Spanish treason, but his success was lacking and he was ultimately driven to other, far more drastic methods.

Thomas Percy 1560-1605
Role: Logistics
Percy had a reputation as a wild youth, having possibly abandoned his wife and killed a Scotsman in a skirmish. When Percy converted to Catholicism, it helped to calm some of his more rebellious ways, funnelling his fiery nature into bettering the Catholic cause in England.

Wright were also all inducted. Not only were they all passionate Catholics, but many possessed large fortunes and manor houses that would certainly aid the cause. Secretly, Catesby was worried. He wasn't a terrorist motivated by blind revenge, he was a moral and religious man, and he wanted to be sure that what he was doing was right. Struggling with his conscience, he repeatedly visited two priests, Father Henry Garnet and Oswald Tesimond. Catesby had no doubts that the king was guilty, but he worried about the innocent people who would inevitably be killed in the blast. He asked if this could be excused: was it okay to kill innocents for the greater good? Sworn to the law of confession, Garnet could tell no one of Catesby's plot, but he attempted to dissuade him.

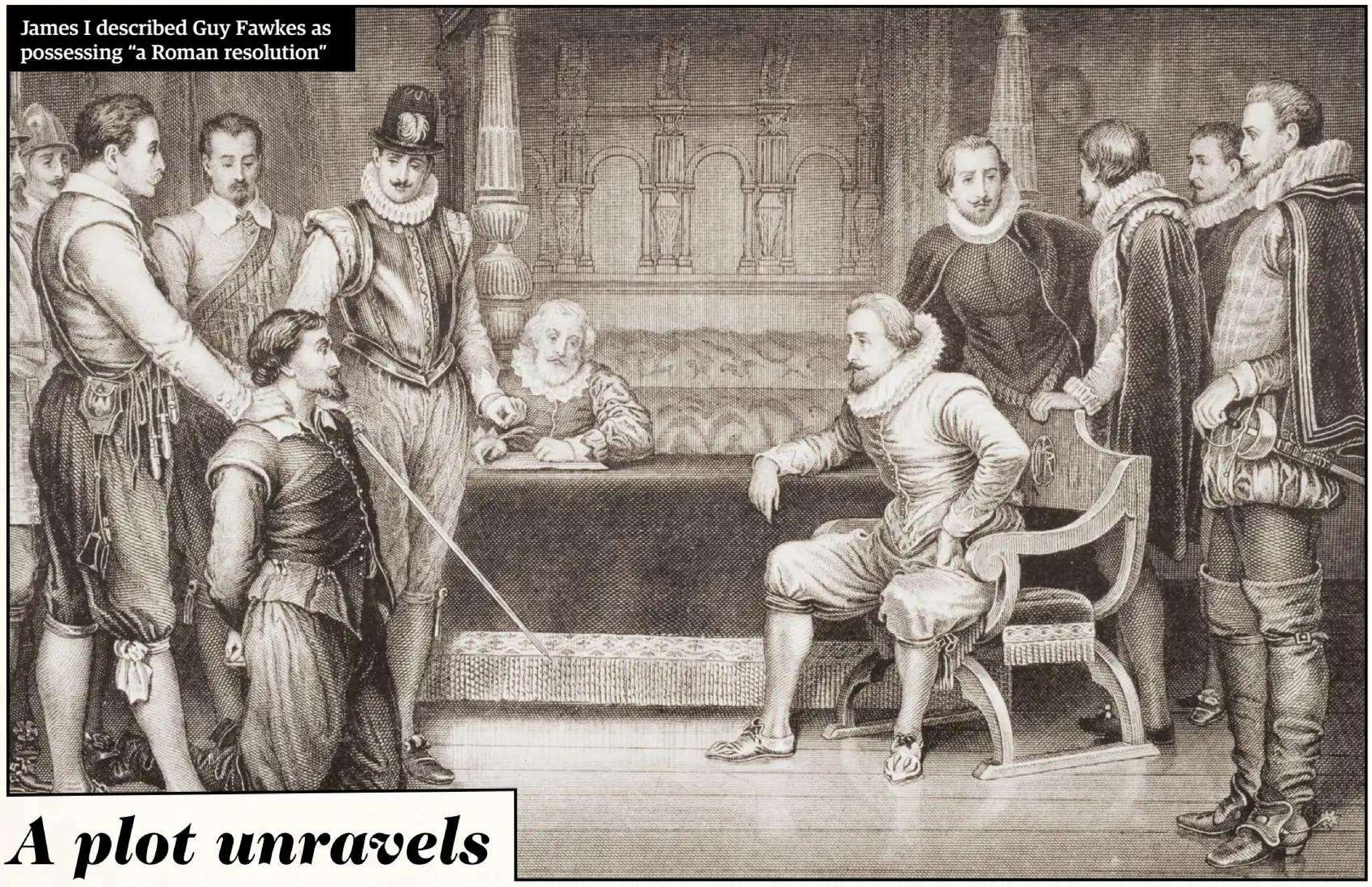

Guido faukes
Guido

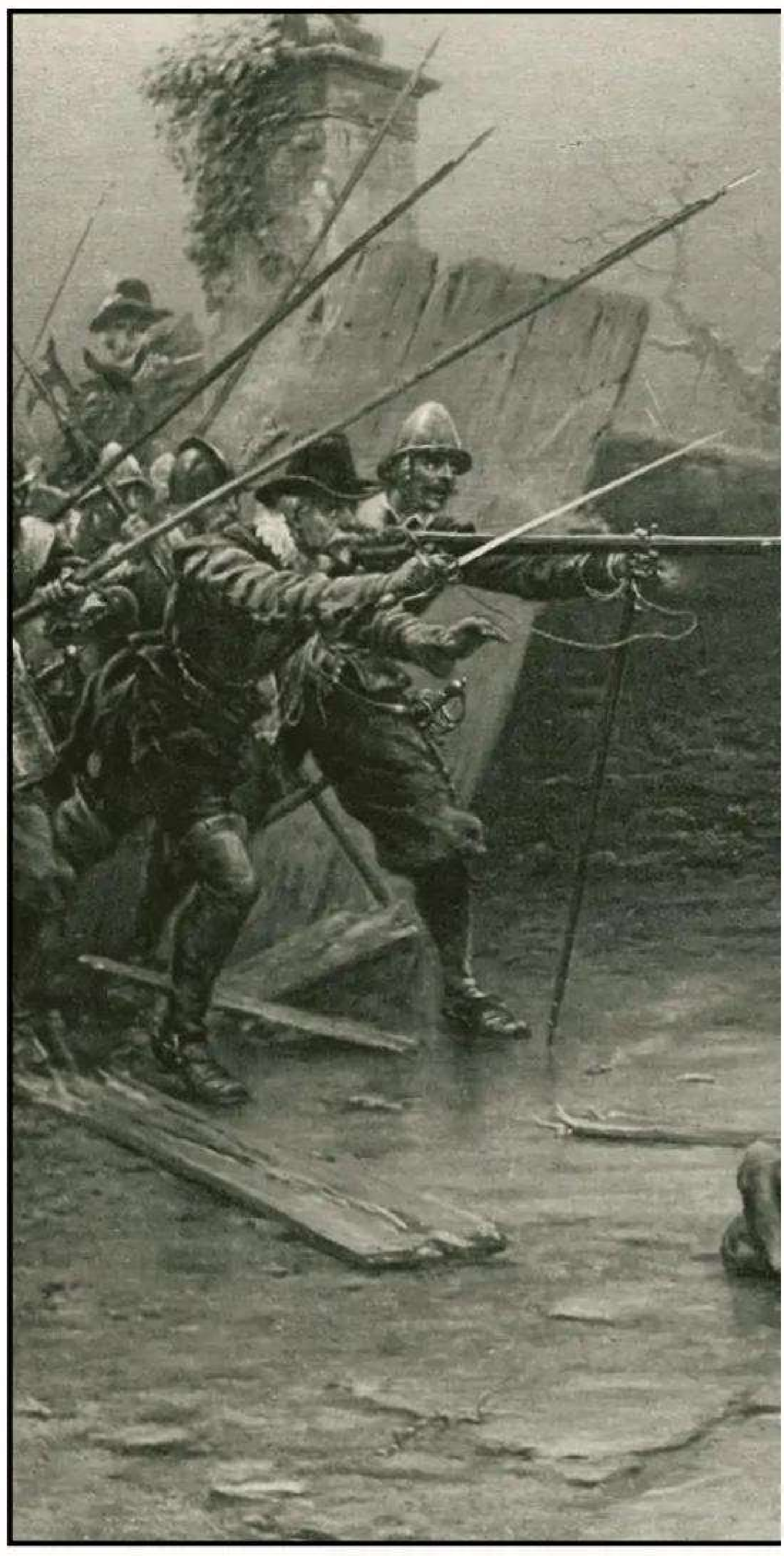
Guy Fawkes' signature before torture (top) and after (bottom)

Despite the priests' warnings, Catesby continued bringing gunpowder into the storage hold. He also began to make plans for the second part of their scheme. Eager to maintain some order after the king's death, he decided that James' child, Princess Elizabeth, would be put in place as his successor. At only eight years old he believed that she could be moulded into the figurehead they desired. Elizabeth was also located not in London but in Coombe Abbey near Coventry. In order to make sure this final stage went off without a hitch, Catesby recruited his final three conspirators, Ambrose Rookwood, Everard Digby and Francis Tresham.

By October, everything was in place. Fawkes would remain in London and light the fuse, before escaping the city and travelling to Europe to drum up support. Meanwhile, in the subsequent madness, a revolt would break out in the Midlands and Elizabeth would be captured. Catesby seemed to have recovered from his earlier concern, but the same could not be said of his co-conspirators. A number of the men had friends in Parliament who were fellow Catholics. Late in the evening on 26 October, a letter arrived at the house of one of these fellow Catholics: Lord Monteagle, a man who had, in his youth, played a part in a fair number of Catholic plots himself. The contents of the letter were shocking. It warned him to abstain from attending Parliament on 5 November, as "they shall receive a terrible blow, this Parliament." Very aware of how serious this threat could be, Monteagle alerted the Earl of Salisbury.

News of the letter quickly found its way back to Catesby, and Tresham was immediately suspected, as Monteagle was his brother-in-law. Catesby and Thomas Wintour furiously confronted the new recruit, threatening to hang him for his idiocy, but Tresham was able to convince his fiery leader of his innocence. However, Catesby was unwilling to listen to Tresham's urges to abandon the plot – he was too committed.


James I described Guy Fawkes as possessing "a Roman resolution"



A plot unravels

As the plot was uncovered, the men fled their separate ways, clinging to hope of revolution

4 November

Evening
Westminster
Catesby, John Wright and Bates decide that the plot will go ahead, despite the discovery that a warning letter was sent to Monteagle, and begin setting out towards the Midlands.

Night
Parliament vaults
The king's men search the vaults under Parliament. They stumble upon Fawkes standing by a pile of wood, who calmly informs them his name is John Johnson, and that he works for Thomas Percy.

Late night
Parliament vaults
Under the king's orders, the men return to the vault and find Fawkes dressed ready for a getaway. He is immediately arrested and taken before the king in the early hours of 5 November.

5 November

Morning
Westminster
Christopher Wright learns of the plot's discovery and rushes to the Duck and Drake Inn to inform Thomas Wintour. Wintour warns those still in London – Percy, Keyes and Rookwood.

Midday
Near Milton Keynes
Rookwood rides furiously for two hours and manages to catch up with Catesby and the others to warn them of the plot's failure and Fawkes' arrest. They decide to continue on to Dunchurch.

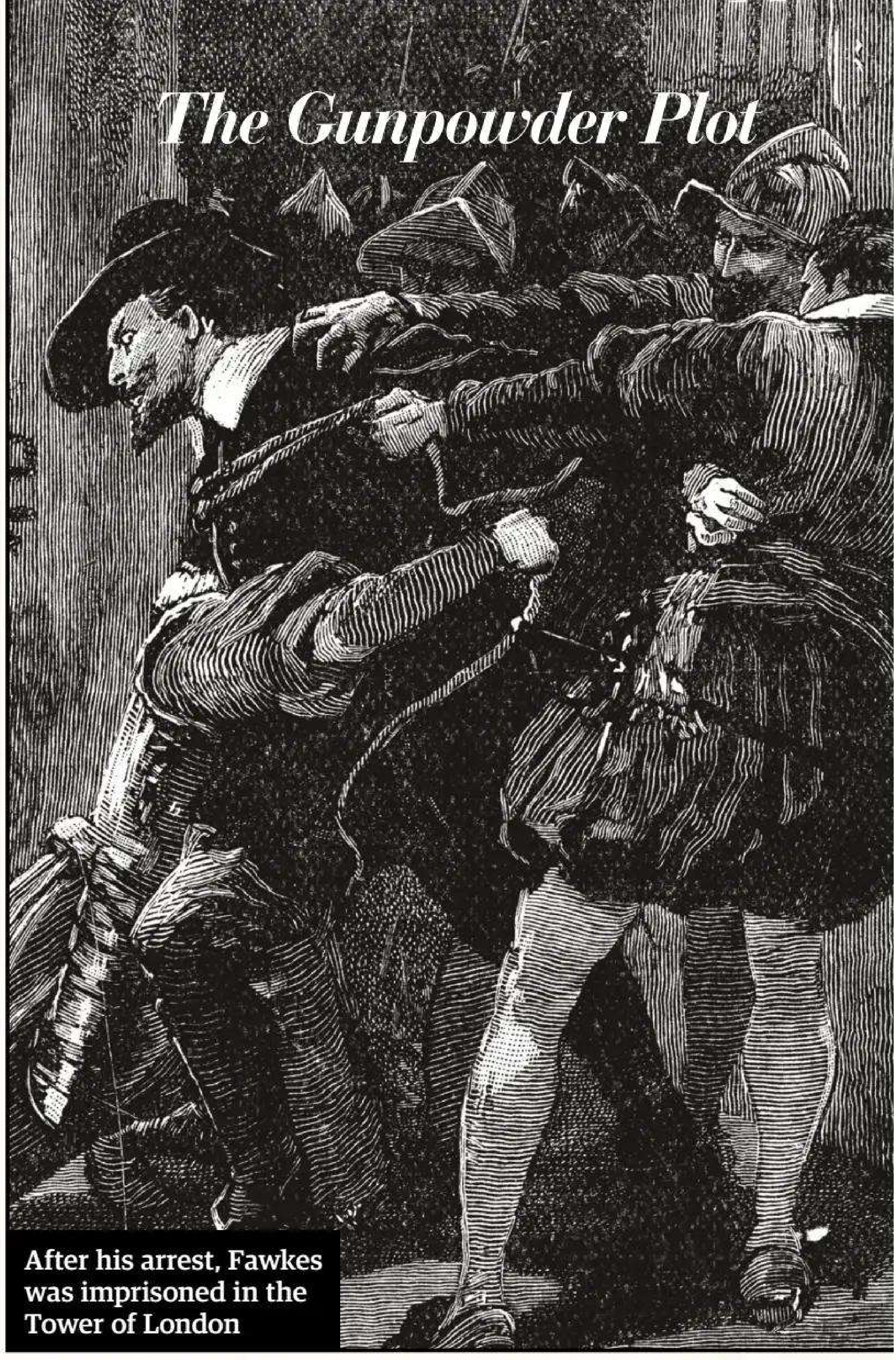
6pm
Ashby St Ledgers
The six fleeing conspirators meet up with Robert Wintour, then continue on and meet with Digby, who is accompanied by a hunting party. They continue west to Warwick.

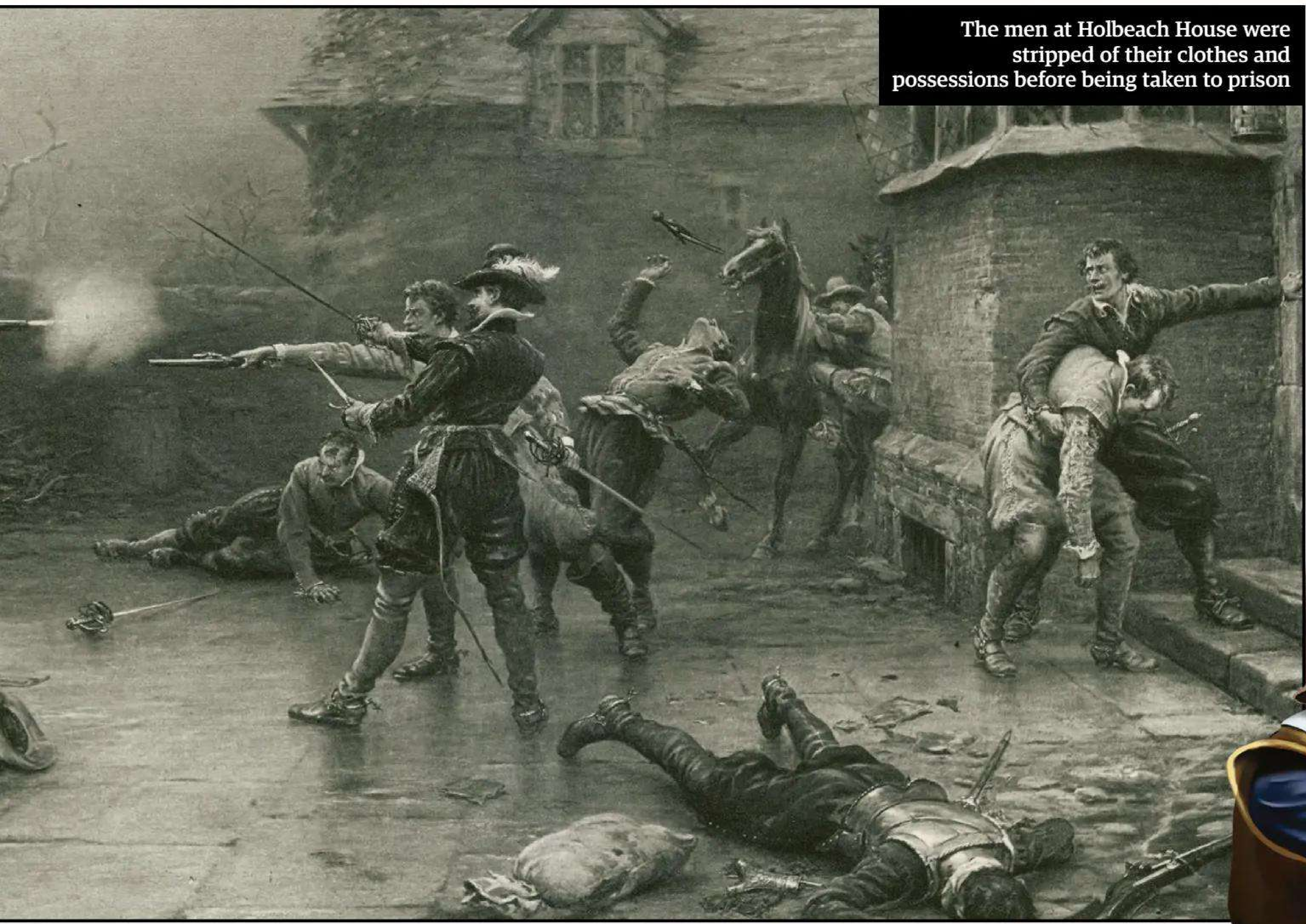
Meanwhile, the king had learned of the mysterious letter. Unlike many of his advisers, he took the warning very seriously. However, he decided to bide his time until the night in question, and see if the conspirators would carry out their alleged plot. When 4 November dawned, both the king and Catesby leapt into action. Catesby, with John Wright and Bates, left for the Midlands to launch the second part of the plan, while Fawkes prepared for his pivotal part.

The king was preparing too. James' men were searching all the buildings around Parliament for signs of anything suspicious. It was in the cellar during one of these searches that they stumbled upon Fawkes. Dressed as a serving man, he stood before a large, suspicious pile of firewood. He explained that he was a servant of Percy, though came across rather desperate. Apprehensive but not willing to upset him further, the men left to report their findings to the king. As soon as James heard Percy's name, his suspicions were aroused, and he ordered another search of the cellar to confirm the servant's presence.

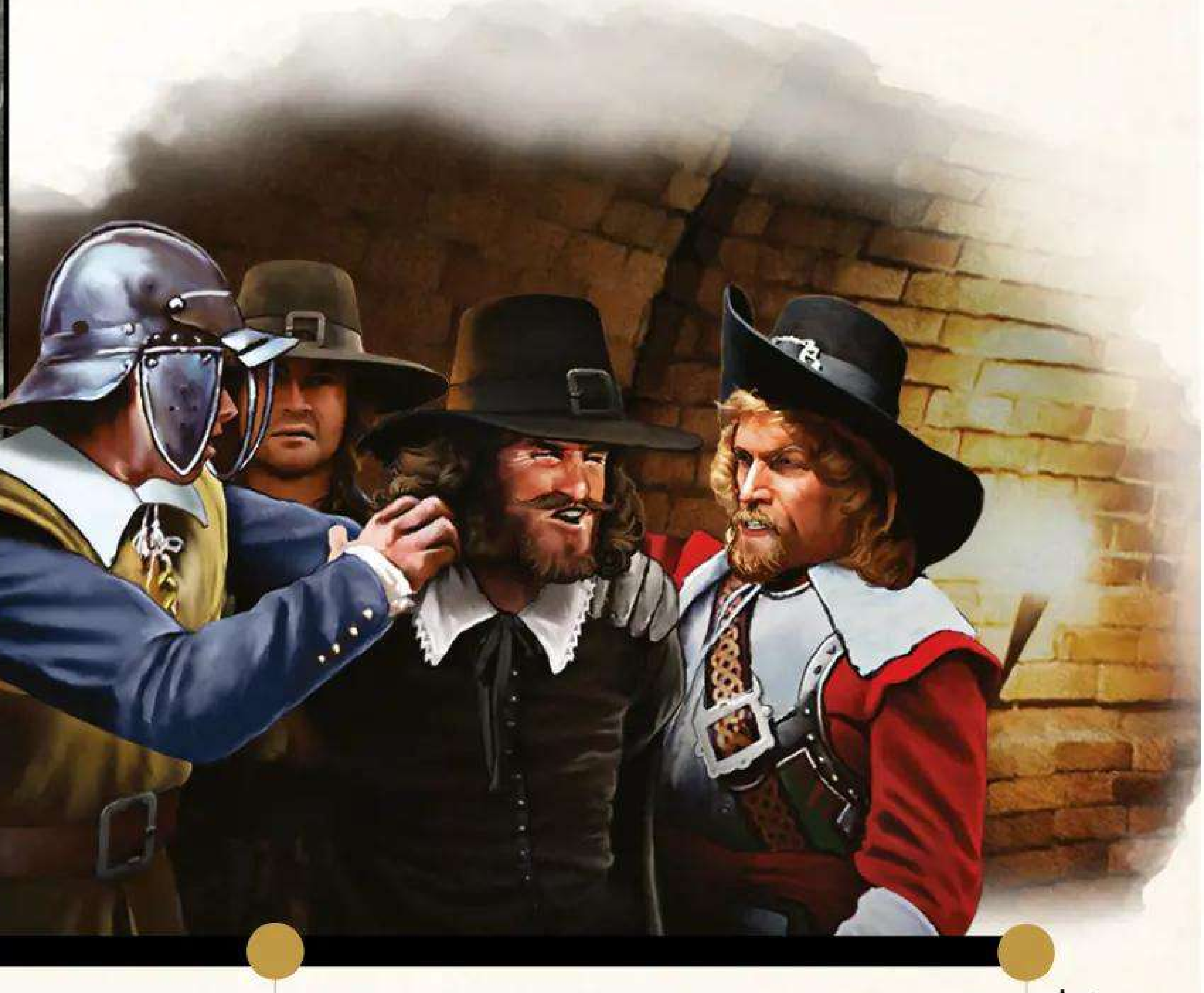
When the men returned, Fawkes was still there. Dressed in his hat, cape and spurs, ready for a quick getaway, he was arrested and searched. Although he stuck to his story and insisted his name was John Johnson, they discovered matches and touchwood on his person. The king's men inspected the firewood and uncovered 36 barrels of gunpowder, enough to blow the houses of Parliament sky high.

Everything now rested with Fawkes. The plot had failed, that much was obvious, but if he held out long enough, the lives of his friends could be saved. As Fawkes was questioned, he displayed remarkable courage in the face of almost certain death. He stuck by his story that he was indeed John Johnson. However, he did not for a moment deny his intentions, proclaiming that it was his plan to destroy the king and Parliament. When asked for the names of his accomplices, he was insistent he acted alone. James was impressed by Fawkes' resilience, but he needed names, and if torture would loosen his tongue, so be it. News of Fawkes' arrest quickly spread to the other


After his arrest, Fawkes was imprisoned in the Tower of London


The men at Holbeach House were stripped of their clothes and possessions before being taken to prison

> *"Killing the king was a step too far; even his fellow Catholics had deserted him"*



6 November

Morning
Warwick Castle
Catesby and his men raid the castle for supplies, arming themselves for the fight they believe will follow, before continuing to Norbrook where they pick up more weapons.

Afternoon
Huddington
The conspirators arrive in Huddington and meet with Thomas Wintour. Despite Catesby's hopes, nobody is willing to ally with them, and they are forced to continue alone.

Evening
London
The Lord Chief Justice questions Rookwood's servants and uncovers the identity of several of the men involved in the plot, including Catesby, Rookwood and Wintour.

Evening
Tower of London
With Guy Fawkes' resolve still holding, James permits the use of torture to loosen his tongue. He orders that 'gentler tortures' are used first.

7 November

Night
Tower of London
After enduring the horrors of the rack, Guy Fawkes finally confesses the details of the plot as well as the names of his fellow co-conspirators.

Night
Holbeach House
The fugitives arrive at Holbeach House. They spread out their damp gunpowder before a fire and many of them are set alight. Some of the men choose to leave.

8 November

Morning
Holbeach House
200 men led by the Sheriff of Worcestershire besiege Holbeach House. In the gunfight that erupts Catesby, Percy and the Wrights are killed. The others are arrested.

conspirators. The men who remained in London fled. Percy, aware that his name would be linked to the crime, proclaimed: "I am undone!" Rookwood, an exceptional rider, furiously rode in Catesby's direction to warn him. His incredible ride saw him travel 30 miles in just two hours. He arrived breathlessly at Catesby's side and informed him of the plot's uncovering.

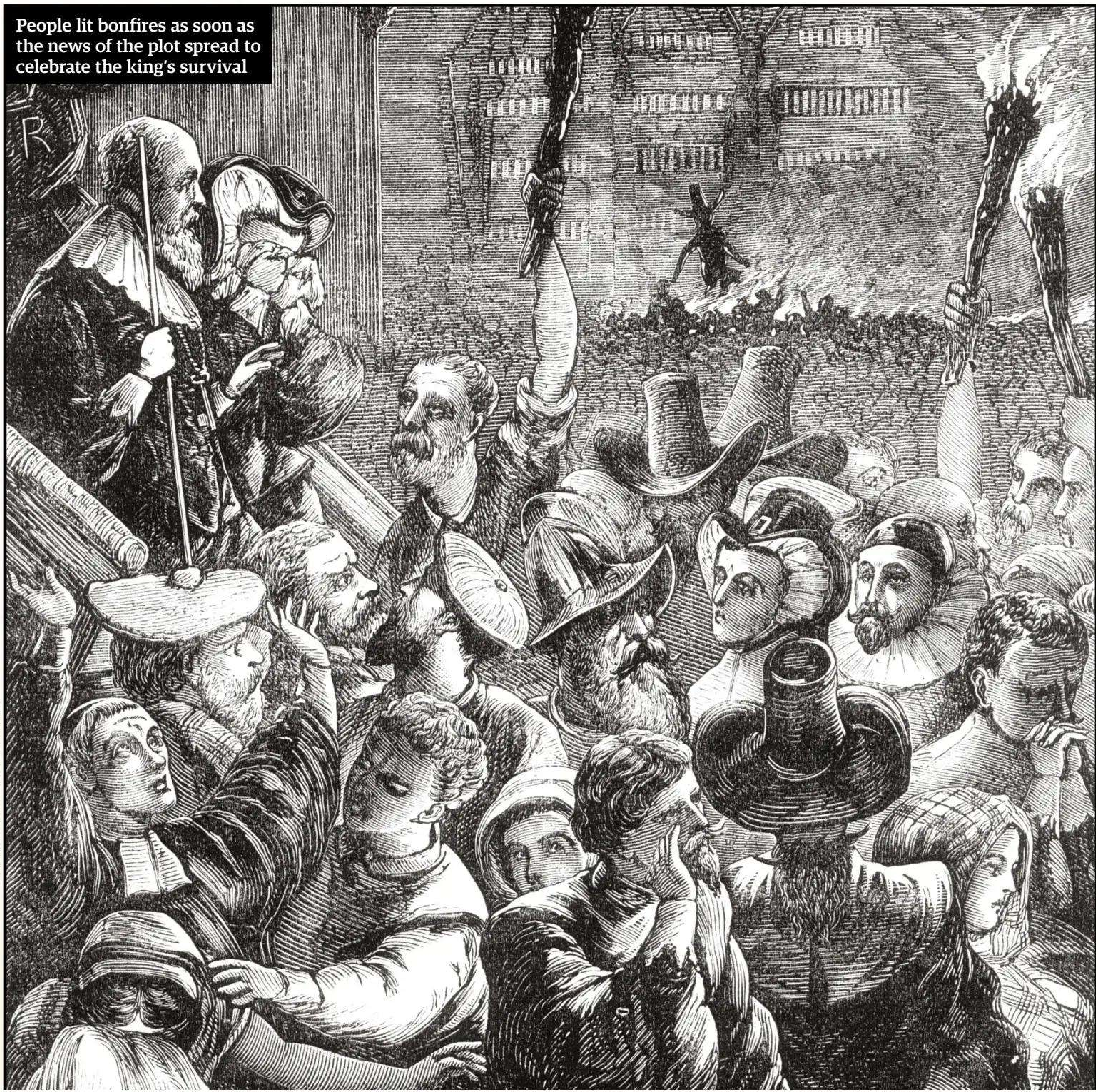
Catesby was crushed. He had poured everything into this revolution and was desperate to cling onto any hope he could find. He proclaimed that he could still gather enough support for an armed uprising. He knew enough resentful Catholics for an insurrection, and one way or another he would have his rebellion. The plotters could have left. There was enough time for them to flee England with their lives, but their commitment to their passionate leader and their belief in the cause was so great that they remained by his side.

The men continued on to the Midlands, but the support Catesby had promised did not come. Word of the treasonous plot had spread rapidly through the country, faster than the men could travel, and even their friends and families turned them away. Catesby had fatally misjudged the situation. Killing the king was a step too far; even his fellow Catholics had deserted him. Wet, miserable and dejected, when the men finally reached their safe house of Holbeach House in Staffordshire, they spread out their gunpowder in front of a fire to dry it off. A spark ignited it, and engulfed Catesby, Rookwood and Grant in flames.

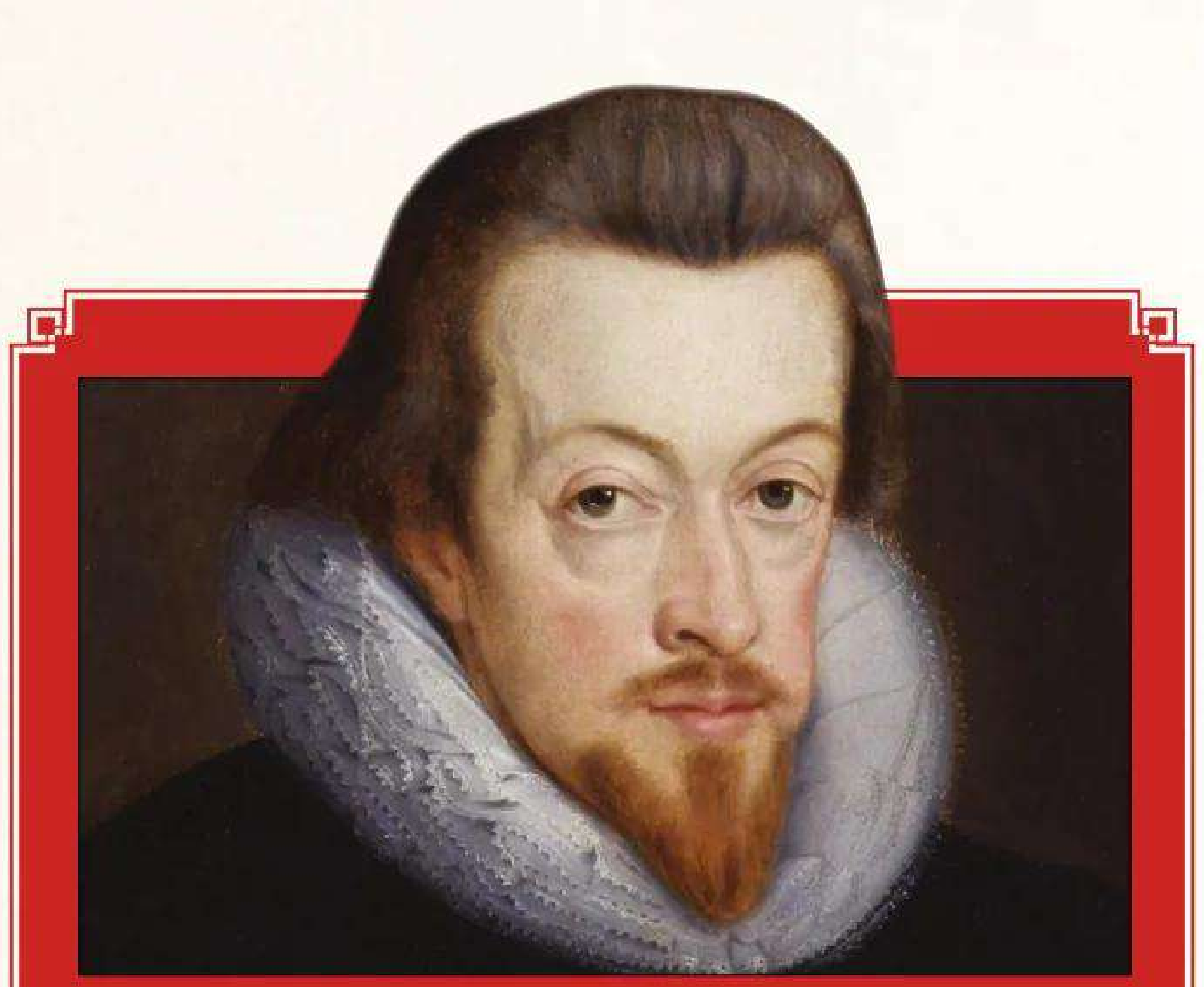
Meanwhile, in London, the king's men were steadily breaking Fawkes' steely resolve. He was placed upside down in manacles and hung from a wall, and most likely strapped to the rack, his limbs agonisingly dislocated. By 7 November, what remained of Fawkes' resolve had crumbled. Broken and drained, he confessed the details of the plot and the names of all his co-conspirators.

Catesby was alive, but for some the explosion was a grim sign and their commitment to their leader finally waned. Gradually, the team began to unravel. Digby headed for the authorities; Bates, Littleton and Robert Wintour also made their escape. Eventually, all who remained were Catesby, Percy, Thomas Wintour, the Wright brothers, a wounded Rookwood, and Grant, who had been blinded by the fire. Miserable and broken, when the 200 armed government men descended on the group on 8 November, the fugitives had no hope.

The fight was brief: Wintour was shot first followed by the Wright brothers and Rookwood. Catesby and Percy managed to summon the last embers of their fiery zeal and made a final stand together at the door. When they fell, it was as one, by a single bullet. On the edge of death and bleeding out, Catesby used his final ounce of strength to drag himself to a photo of the Virgin Mary, and cradling it in his arms, breathed his last.



People lit bonfires as soon as the news of the plot spread to celebrate the king's survival



The Gunpowder conspiracy

Was the plot really a state conspiracy?

The mystery

Much of the suspicion surrounding the plot has involved, in some part, the role of the Earl of Salisbury. It was Salisbury who Monteagle alerted upon receiving the letter, and his peculiar actions have prompted many to ponder if he had more knowledge of the plot than he let on. First of all, he failed to immediately inform the king of the plot, who was out hunting and did not return for several days. Salisbury's involvement in the plot actually began before the letter even arrived, as he was aware that something was being planned. When the king did learn of the letter, Salisbury denied this knowledge completely, and allowed the king to take full credit. This may have been a clever political play, but perhaps it hints at more.

The motive

The foiling of the plot benefited the king immensely. The feeling of goodwill towards the monarch encouraged Parliament to grant astonishingly high subsidies for the king, and the thanks for this lay at Salisbury's feat. An ambitious man, Salisbury expertly exploited the situation to garner favour with the monarch, and also allowed him to introduce more anti-Catholic legislation. Salisbury's anti-Catholic feelings far outstripped the monarch's, and he wished to rid England of the religion once and for all.

His involvement

Conspiracy theorists surmise that Salisbury may have invented the entire plot himself, targeting known Catholic agitators and penning the letter to Monteagle. Others argue that instead of inventing it, Salisbury infiltrated the plot far earlier than the letter revealed, and simply allowed it to continue, knowing that he could use it later to fuel the fire of anti-Catholicism.

Evidence

The ease in which the conspirators conducted the plot is the main evidence here. The fact that they were able to get 36 barrels of gunpowder in a country where gunpowder was strictly controlled by the government and store them under the Houses of Parliament would have been very difficult. However, the lack of any other evidence makes this conspiracy impossible to prove. If Salisbury invented the plot, it is unlikely all the men would have confessed to the crime, knowing that death would be the result. The more likely conclusion is that Salisbury was a quick-thinking opportunist, who, upon uncovering the truth, exploited the situation for all that it was worth.

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> *"Before the trials even began, the verdict was a foregone conclusion"*

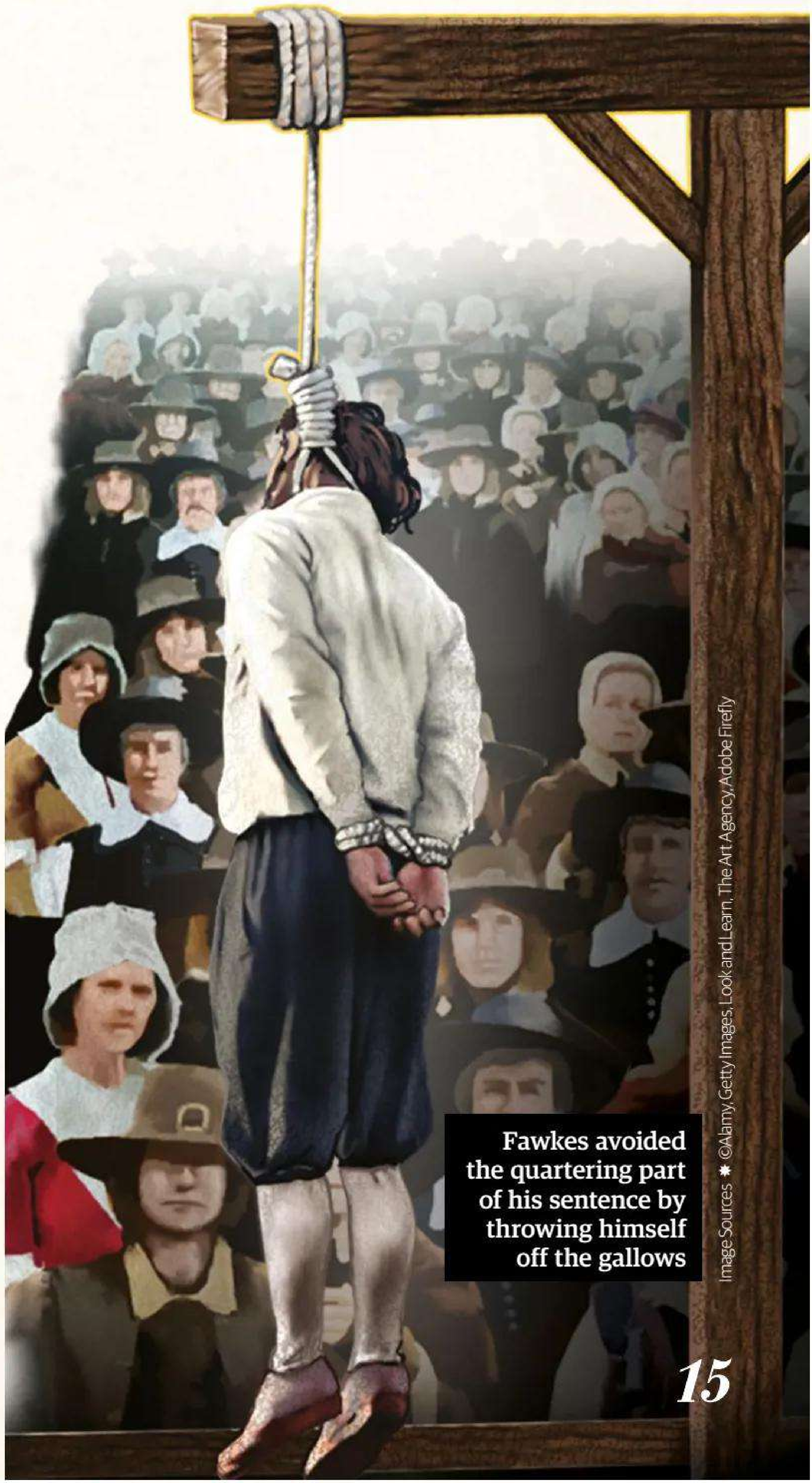
The men who died at the house – Catesby, Percy and the Wright brothers – were lucky. Those who remained were rounded up, arrested and thrown in prison. Under threat of torture, all of the men admitted their involvement in the plot. Before the trials even began, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. The men were paraded up and jeered at by a furious audience. The conspirators had no defence, so could only utter their own pleas for mercy. Rookwood in particular spoke for all the men when he said he was "neither actor nor author," and had acted out of blind devotion to their ringleader – Catesby, "whom he loved above any worldly man." The people didn't care how charismatic their leader was. They wanted blood, and they were going to get it. The men were declared guilty of treason, and on a chilly 30 January, the first four faced their punishment. They were dragged through the street strapped to a wooden panel on the back of a horse. Then, the men were stripped down to their shirts and their heads placed in a noose. They were briefly hung, but cut down while still breathing so they could experience the pain of having their genitals cut off and burned before their eyes. The bowels and the heart were then removed, and the bodies cut into pieces and displayed for the birds to pick at. The bodies of Catesby and Percy were also decapitated, and their heads exhibited as a grim warning. Only one man, the final to face punishment, managed to escape the pain of castration and disembowelling – Guy Fawkes, broken and barely able to stand, used his final ounce of strength to leap from the gallows and break his neck, dying instantly.

The plan had been a disastrous failure, and the unearthing of such a dangerous Catholic plot that almost ended in complete tragedy did little to help the lives of Catholics in England. Although James was quick to make it clear that he did not blame all Catholics in his nation, strict laws against them were soon implemented.

True Catholic emancipation would take a further 200 years to appear, and the men who had schemed, fought and died for it would live on only in legend and rhyme.

Fawkes' legacy

The link between the Gunpowder Plot and bonfires was created almost immediately. While Fawkes was still subject to interrogations on 5 November, people around London lit bonfires in celebration of their monarch's escape. These fiery pyres spread all across the country as the news travelled, and instantly became part of the tradition. The king introduced an Act declaring that all his people had to attend a thanksgiving service to celebrate his survival. This annual service continued until 1859, cementing the Gunpowder Plot in the nation's memory. Even in 1647, when all feast days were abolished, the 5 November celebration remained. Bonfire Night took on a new form in the 18th century, with people burning effigies of the pope and treating it as a general anti-Catholic event. As Fawkes' association with the plot grew, people began to burn effigies of Fawkes instead, a tradition that continues to this day. The religious overtones of the event have been all but extinguished.



Fawkes avoided the quartering part of his sentence by throwing himself off the gallows

Image Sources ✱ ©Alamy, Getty Images, Look and Learn, The Art Agency, Adobe Firefly

RELIGION, REFORMATION & RULE

18 Timeline of the Reformation
20 Waging War
32 The Protestant Reformation
36 England's Reformation
42 Catholic Hysteria
48 Rebels and Recusants
50 The Elizabethan Religious Settlement
52 The End of an Era

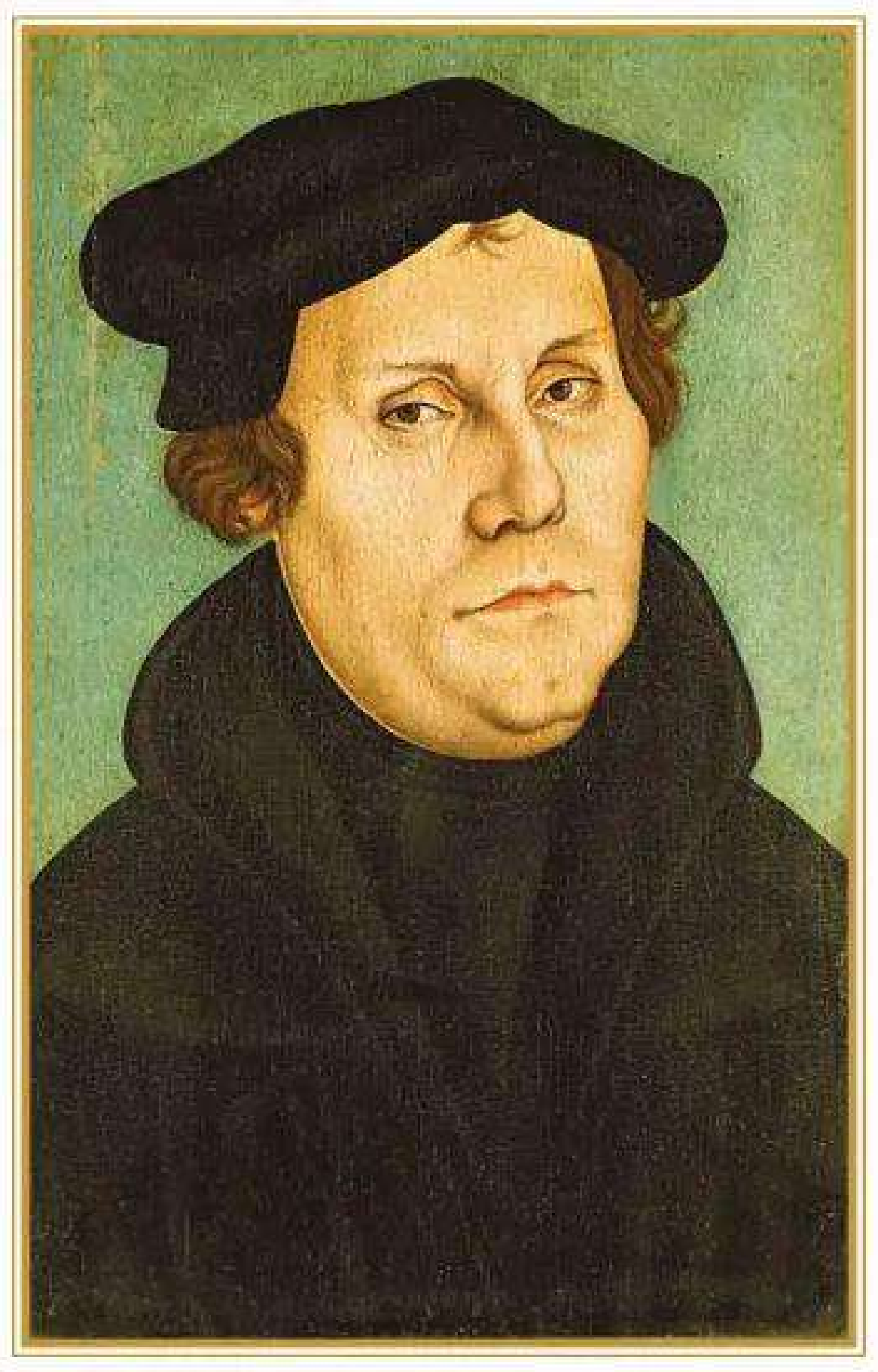
Image Sources ✱ Adobe Firefly

THE PROTESTANT

How a single act of defiance sparked a wildfire of destruction and religious reform that swept through Europe and changed the world forever

Martin Luther's Defiance

Luther posts his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg in protest at some of the Church's practices, including the sale of indulgences as a means of raising money.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1517

A Collision Course with Rome

Luther publishes and circulates a damning pamphlet in which he discusses the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, as well as openly criticising both the Church and the Pope.

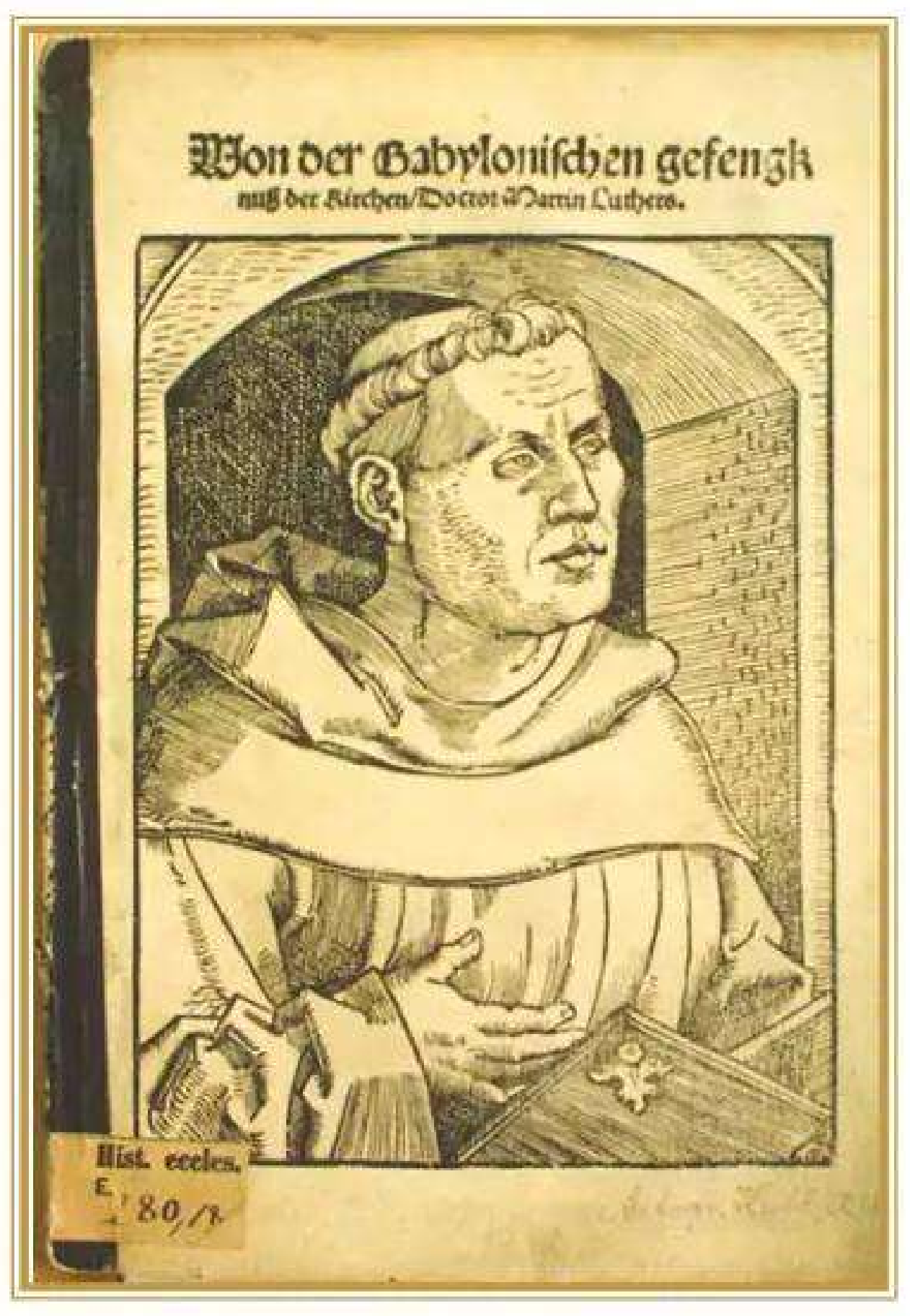


Image Source ✸ Userims.

1520

John Calvin

John Calvin publishes his version of reform, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Catholic Church is now under attack from different factions of reformers with very differing views.

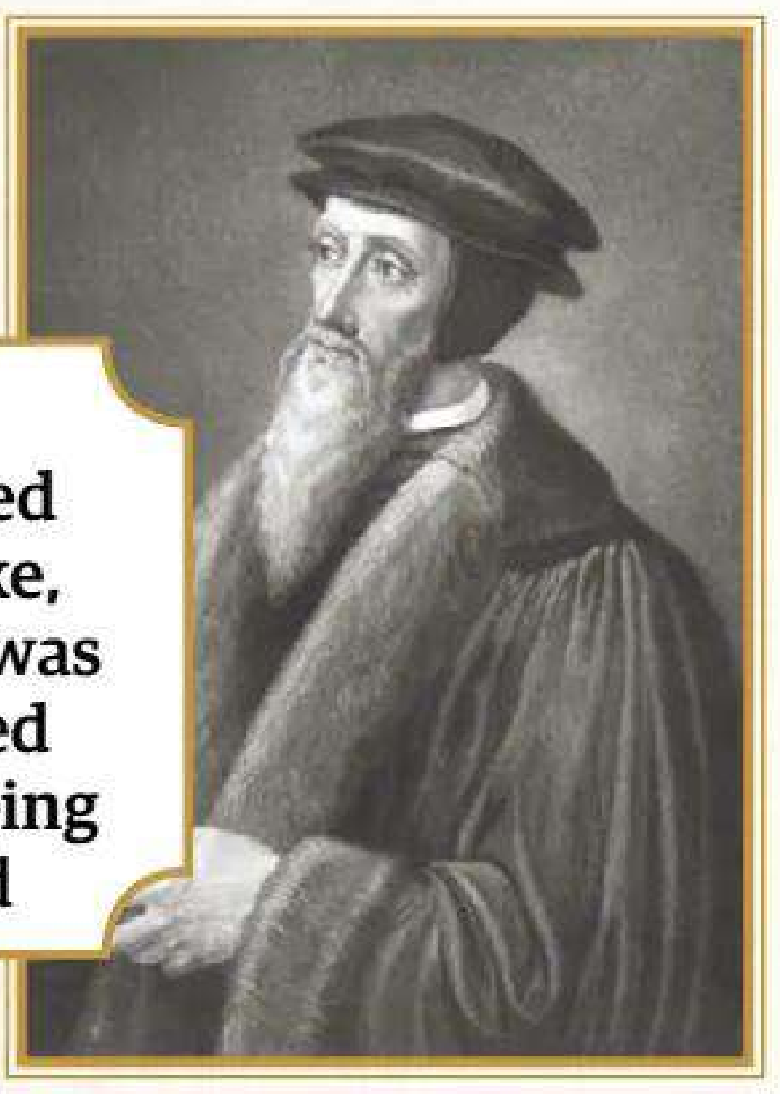


Image Source ✸ Public Domain; Author Unkown.

After being tied to a stake, Tyndale was strangled before being burned

1536

Dissolution of the Monasteries

4 YEARS to complete

A total of about **376** monasteries

For all monasteries with a revenue of less than **£200** per year

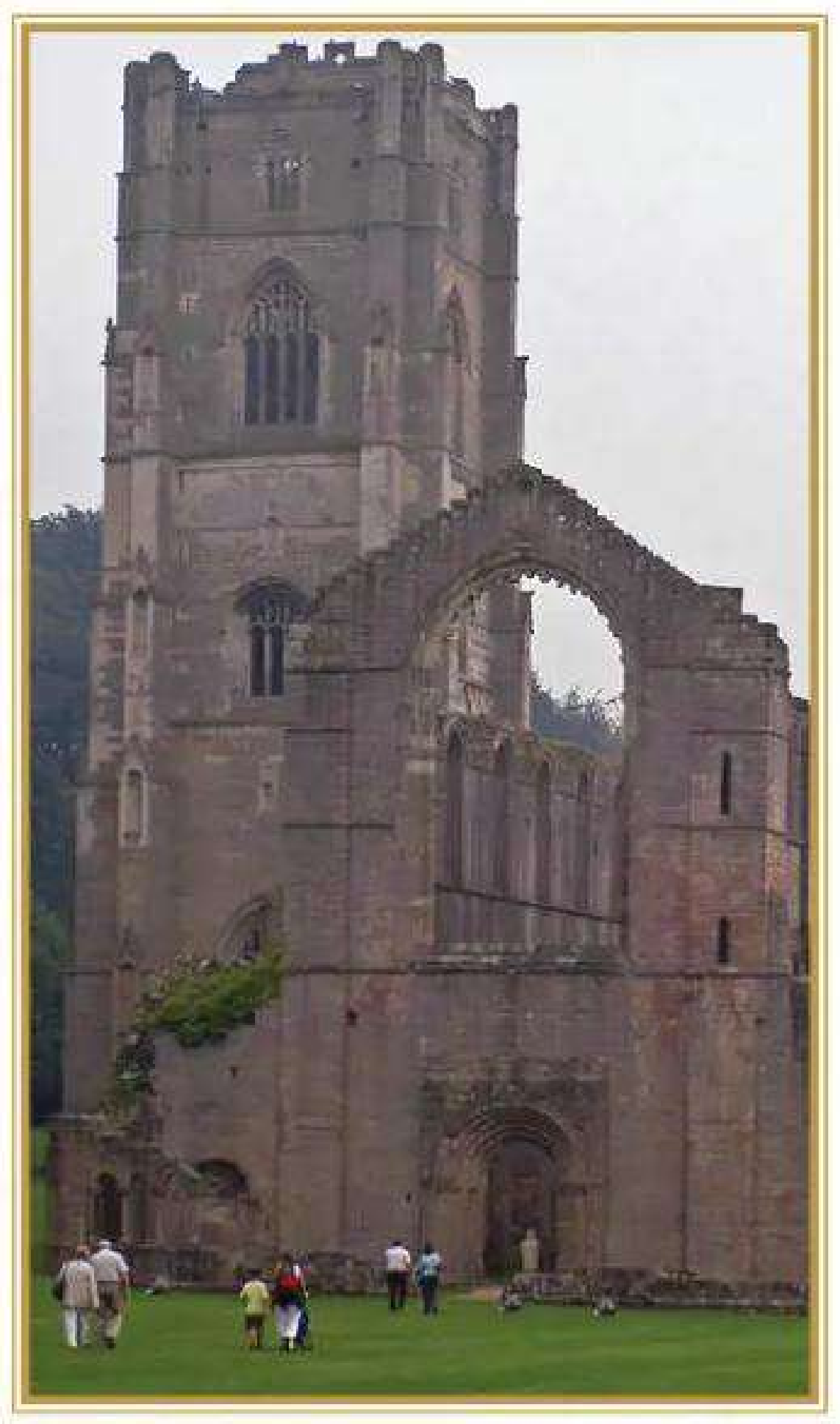


Image Source ✸ Johnteslade.

1536

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Thomas More refuses to accept Henry as Head of the Church and is executed. William Tyndale is found guilty of heresy for his Bible translation and burned at the stake.

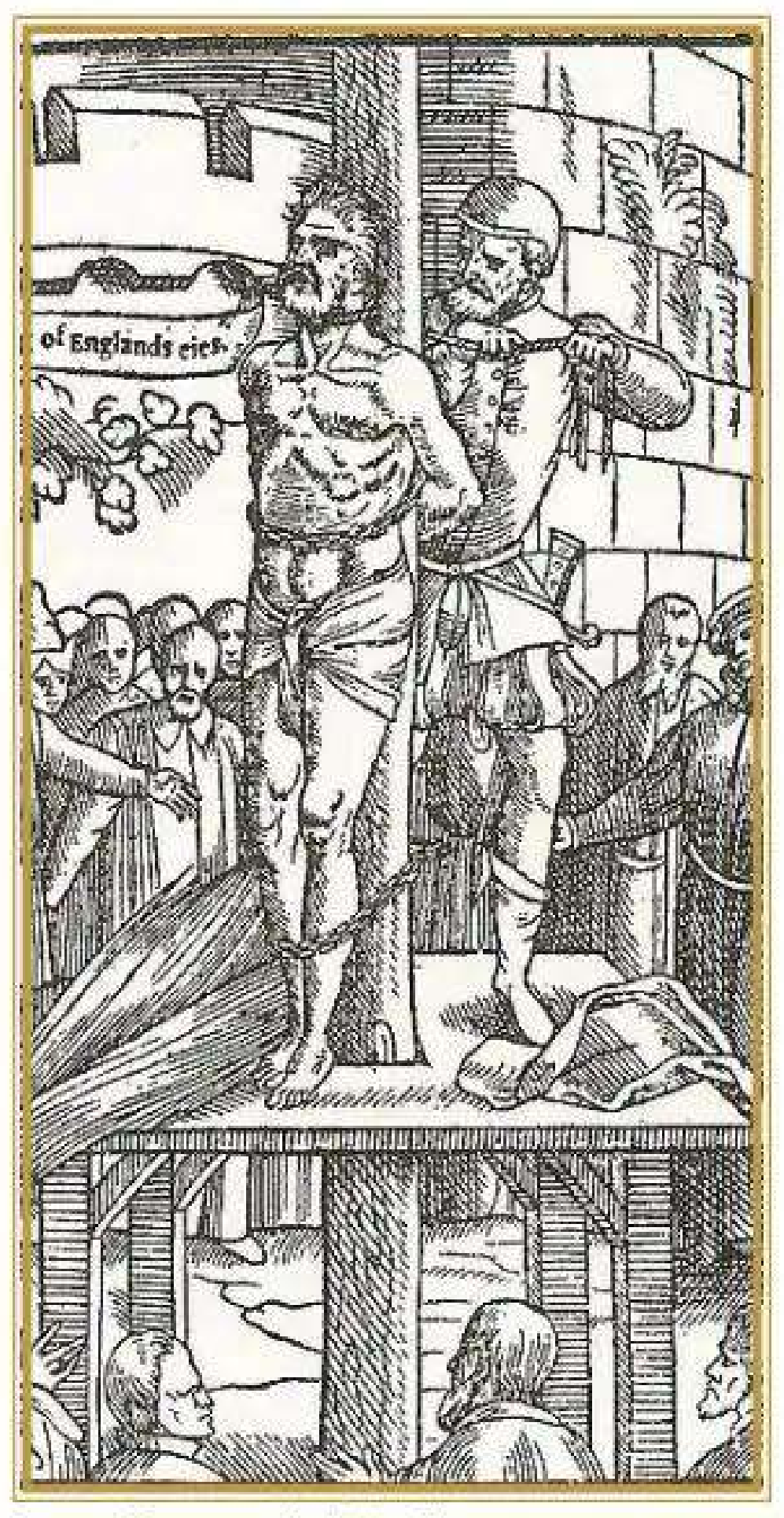


Image Source ✸ John Foxe.

1535-6

The Act of Supremacy

Henry VIII instructs Thomas Cromwell to push through an act to make him Head of the Church in England. All ties with Rome are broken.

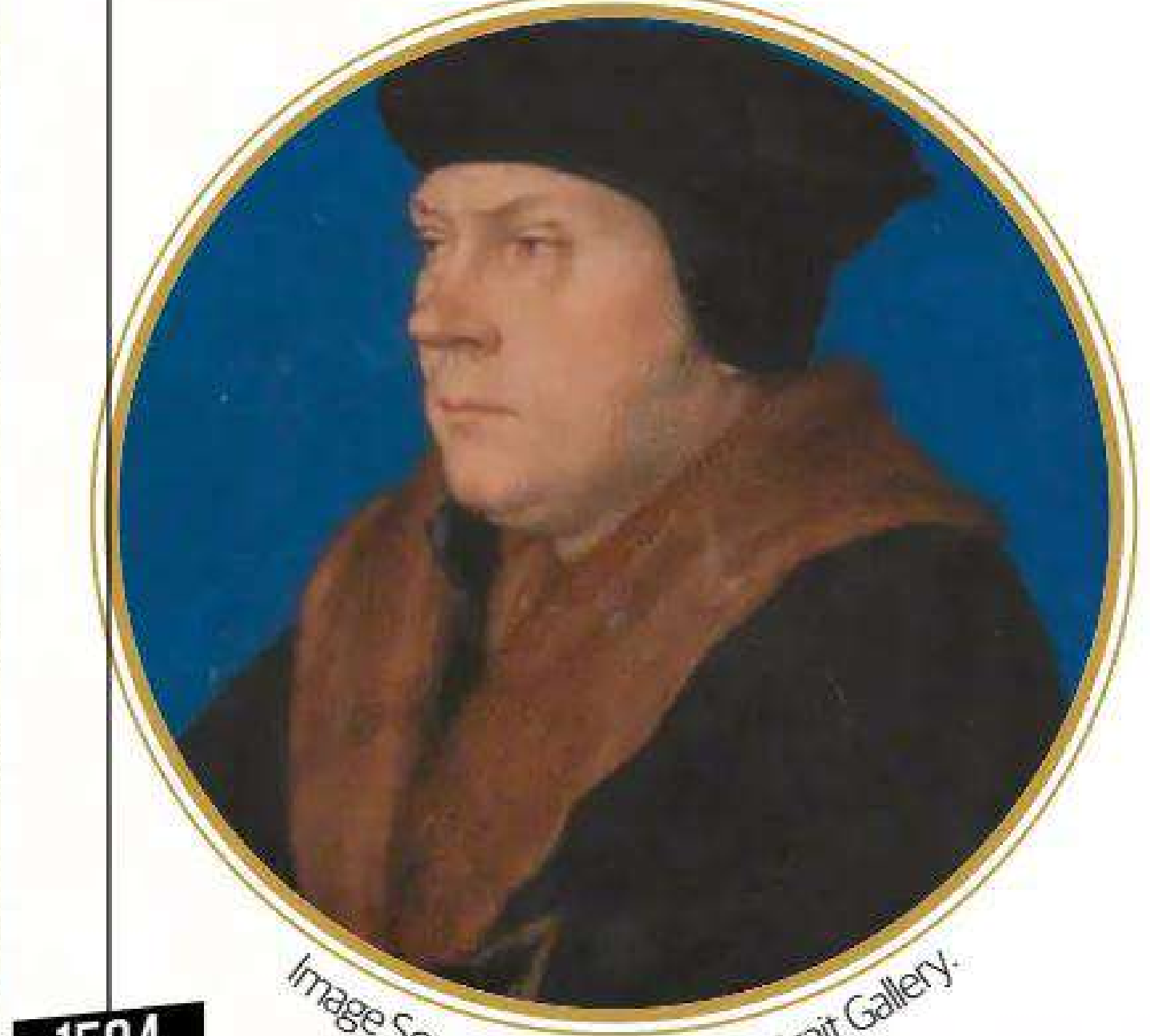


Image Source ✸ National Portrait Gallery.

1534

The Peace of Augsburg

This treaty ends conflict between the Holy Roman Empire and the Schmalkaldic League of Lutheran Princes. Lutheranism is to be tolerated and on track to becoming properly recognised in Europe.

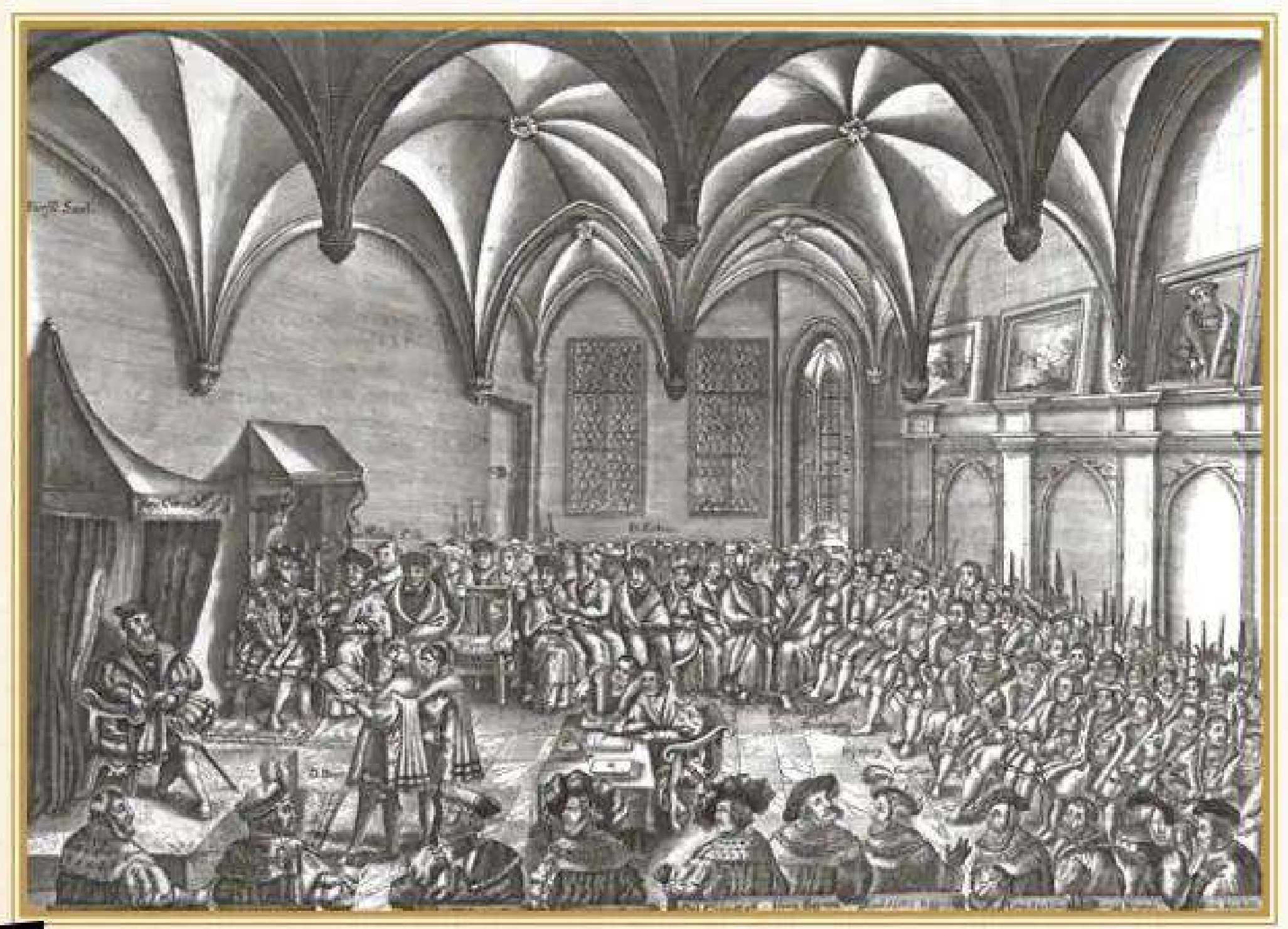


Image Source ✸ Descriptive and Revisionary Democracy.

1555

Protestantism Comes to Scotland

John Knox, a staunch follower of Calvin, is central to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. England returns to Protestantism under Elizabeth I following Mary I's Catholic reign.

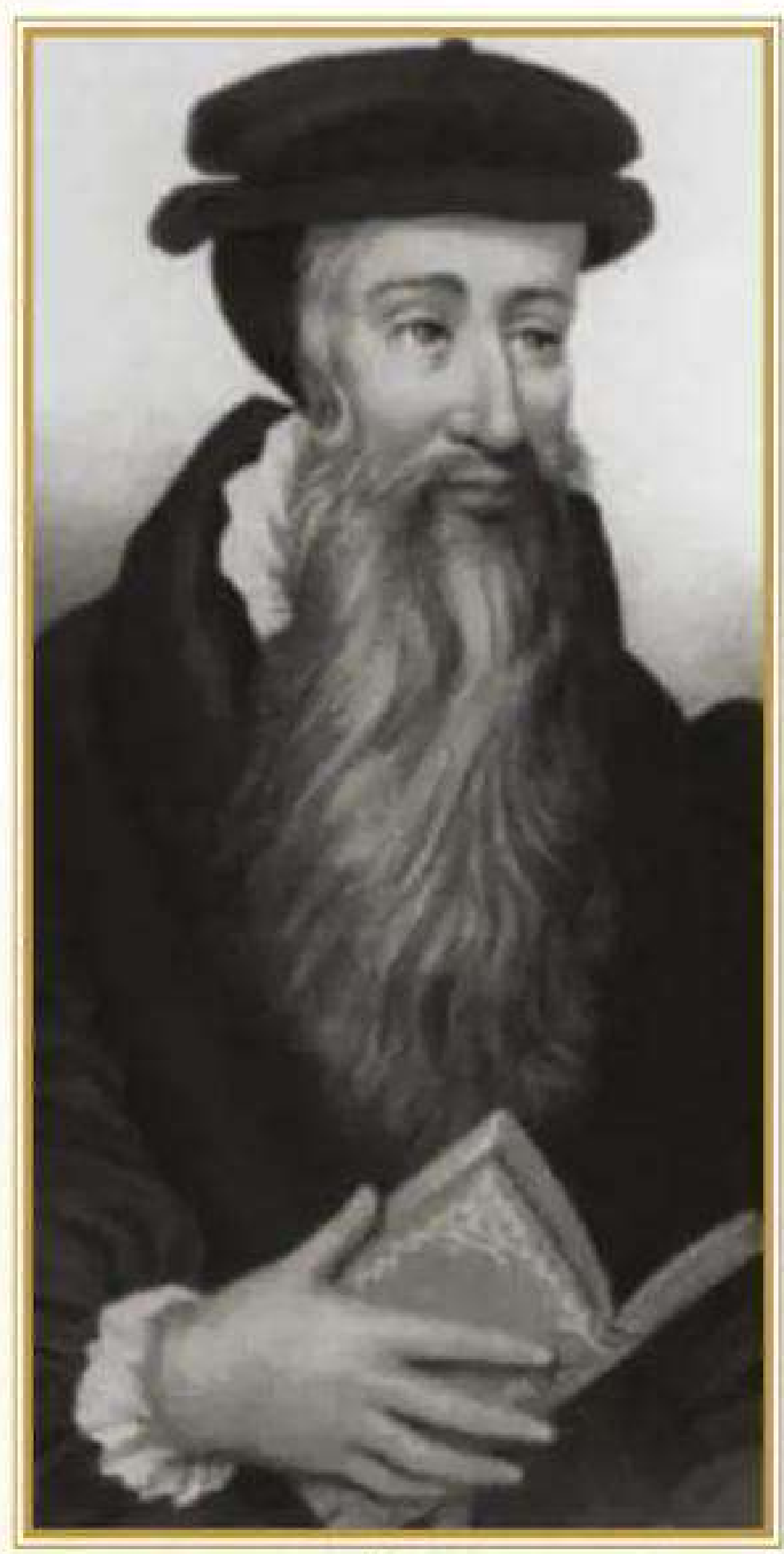


Image Source ✸ Public Domain; Author Unknown.

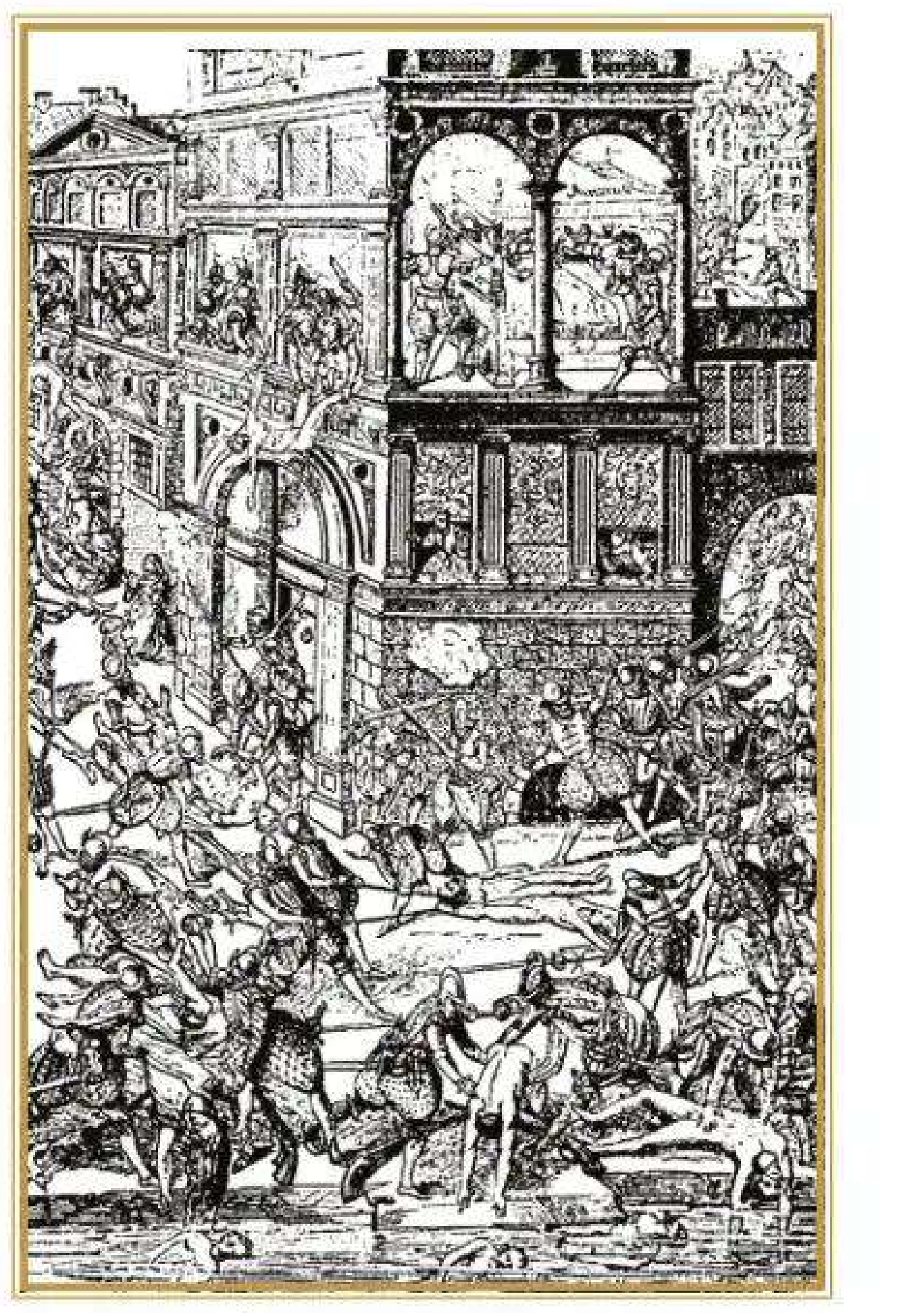
1559

France at War with itself

The French Religious Wars are actually individual conflicts **EIGHT**

4,000 Huguenots are executed at one time

By the time the Edict of Nantes ends the conflict nearly **4 MILLION** are dead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1562-1598

REFORMATION

The Diet of Worms

Summoned to answer questions before the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, Luther's actions are deemed unacceptable and he is condemned as a heretic. He is excommunicated by the Pope.

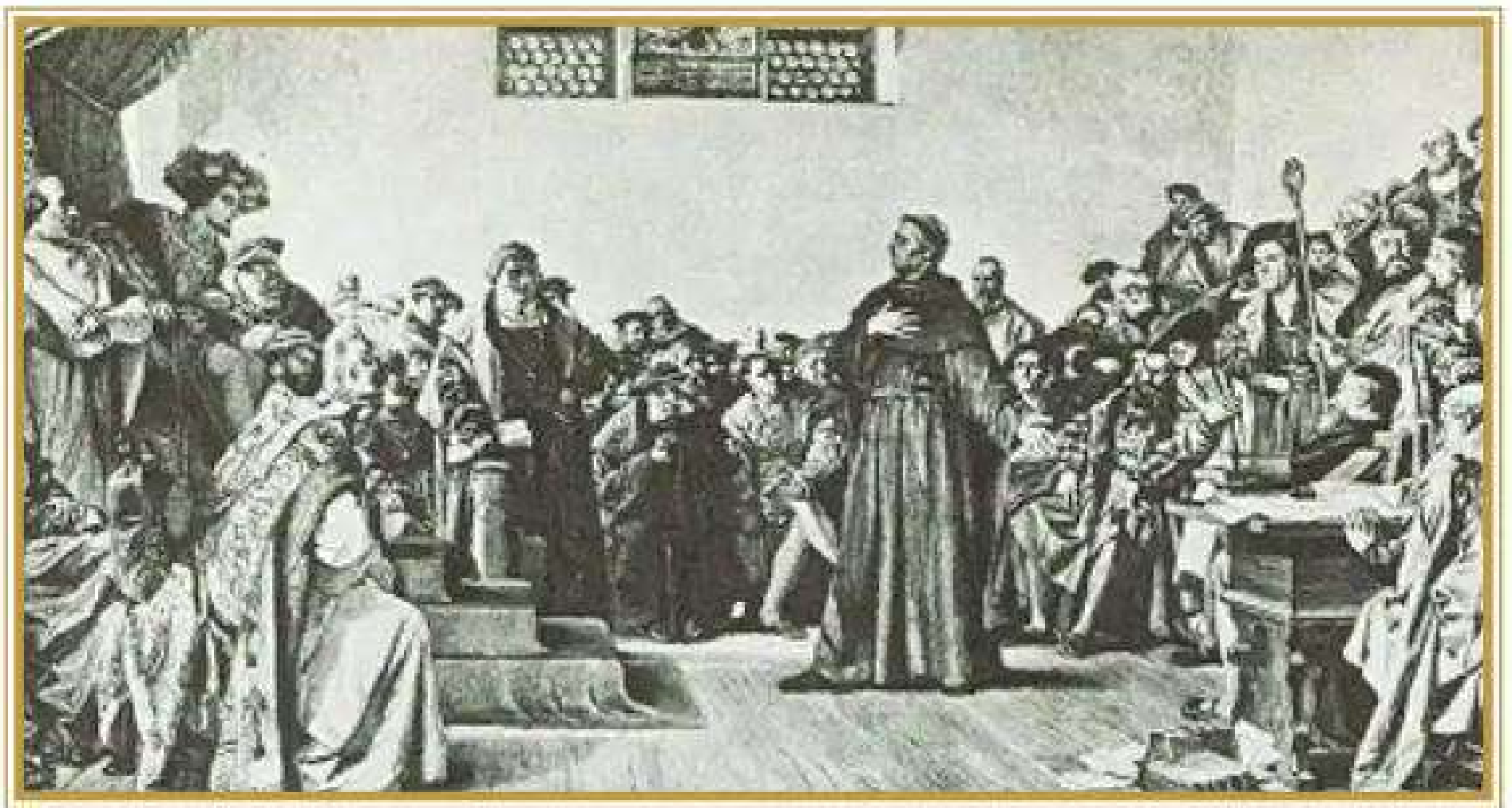


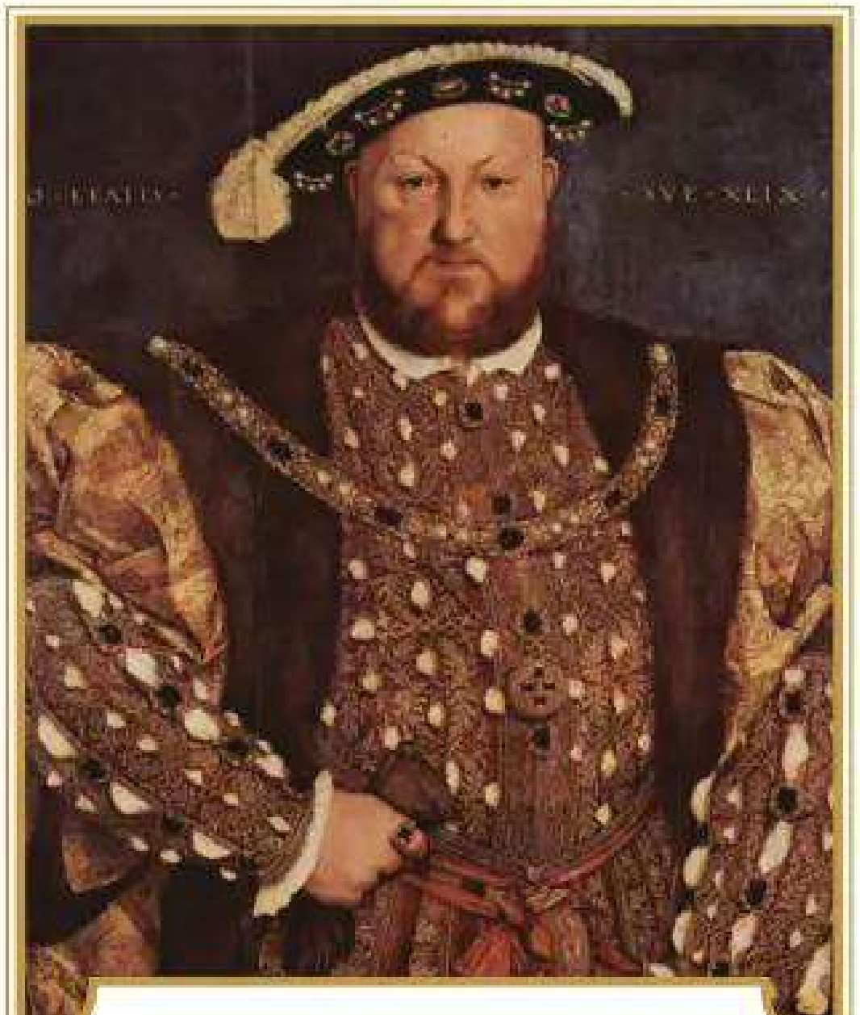
Image Source ✸ Public Domain; Author Unknown.

1521

Henry VIII Attacks Luther

In answer to Luther's attack on the Church, English King Henry VIII writes his own pamphlet *Septem Sacramentorum*, defending the Catholic Church. A grateful Pope gives Henry the title 'Defender of the Faith'.

1521



1521 – Frederick the Wise keeps Luther inside Wartburg Castle, hoping this will lower his popularity

Image Source ✸ Hans Holbein.

A Question of Numbers

Martin Luther challenges the **7** sacraments of the Church

Calvin sets out **5** principles of theology

The Augsburg Confession consists of **28** ARTICLES of Lutheran doctrine presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

Image Source ✸ Thomas Jenner.

1517-1536

Henry Excommunicated

Following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII begins his own path of action in direct conflict with the Pope. Despite being called a 'Defender of the Faith', he is excommunicated by the Pope.

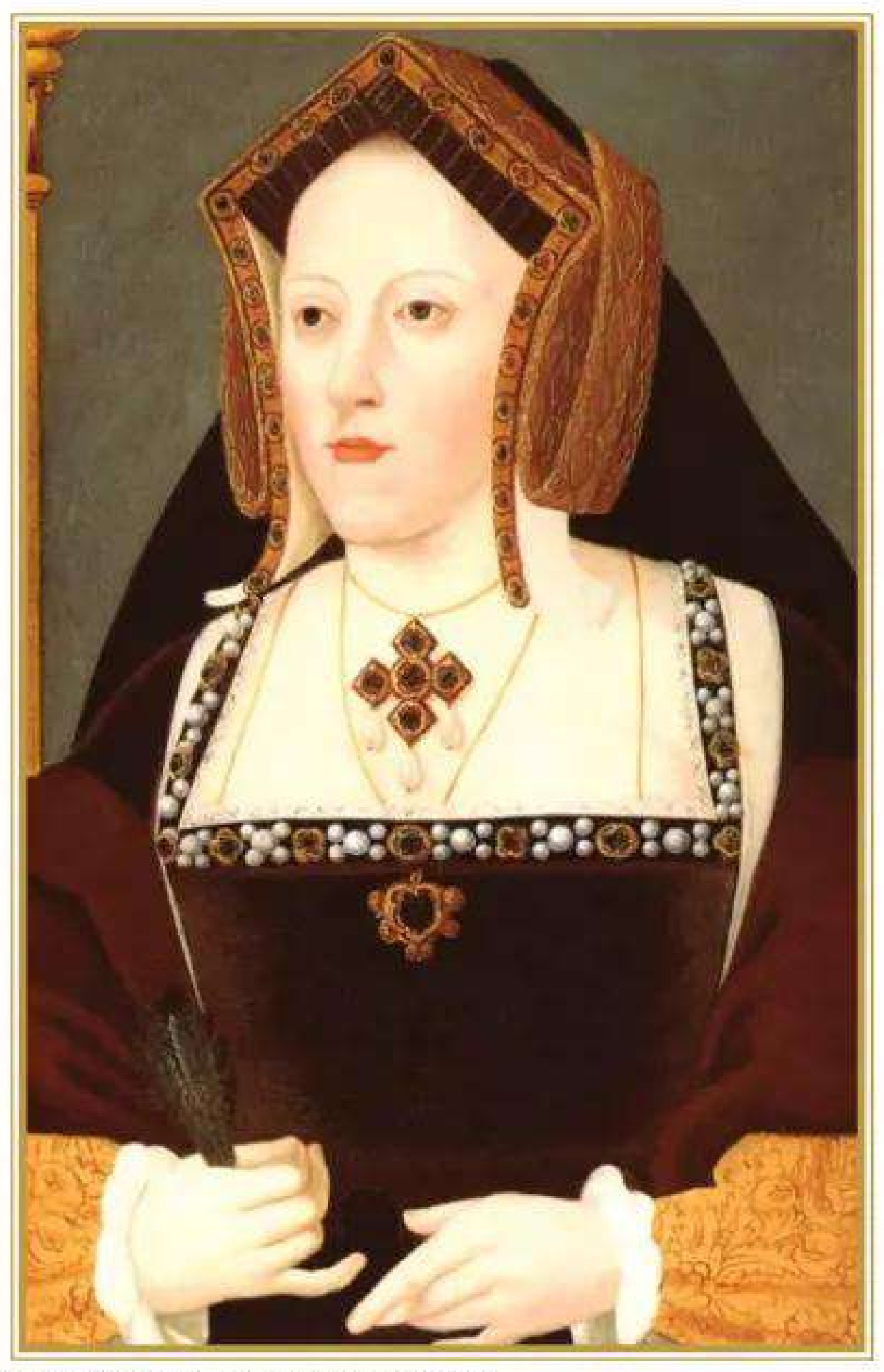
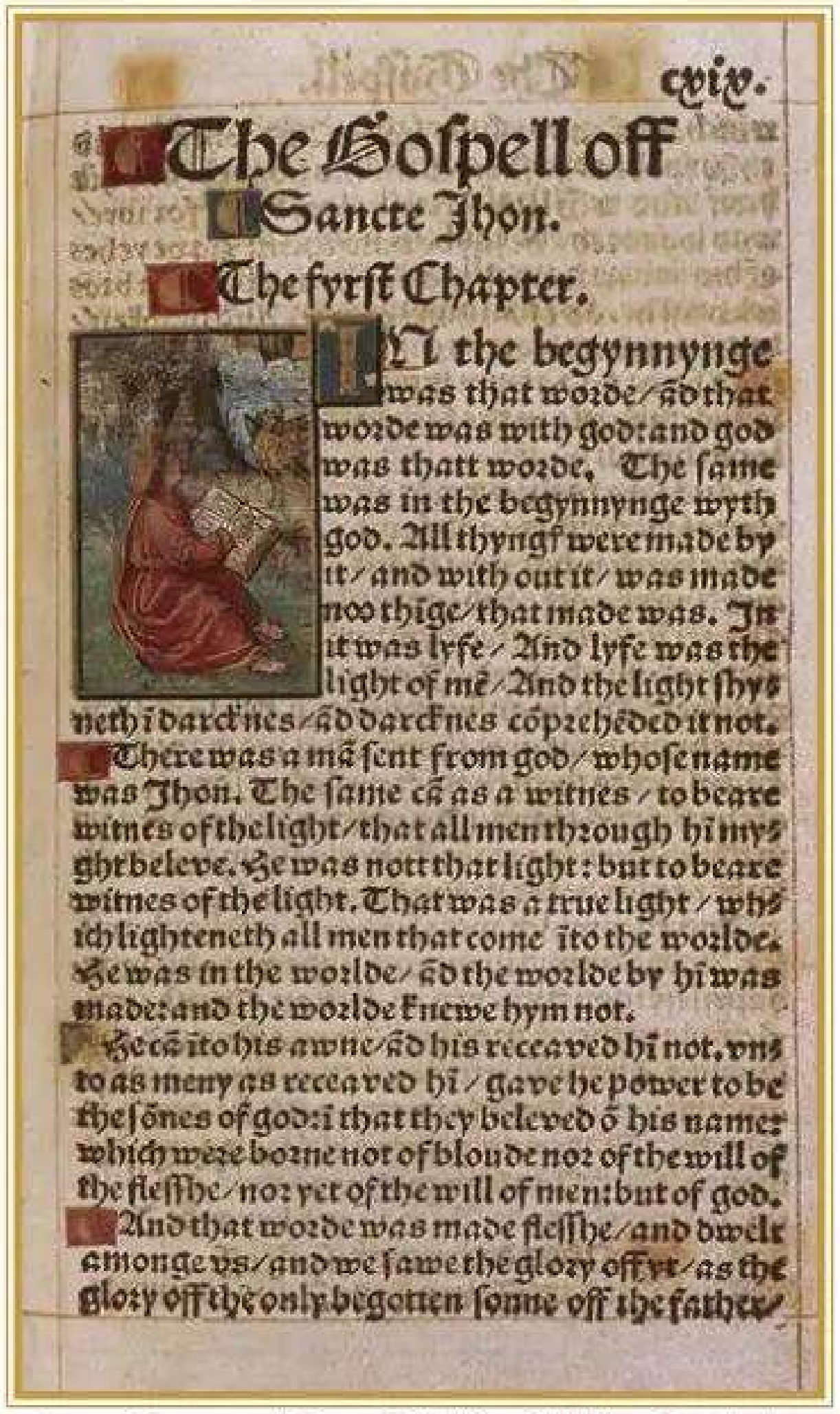


Image Source ✸ Joannes Corvus.

1533

Tyndale's Bible Published

In direct conflict with the Catholic Church's practice of services in Latin, William Tyndale publishes the first English translation. Those able to read can now question the wording and the Church's authority.



cxiv.

The Goſpell off
Sancte Jhon.
The fyrſt Chapter.

IN the begynnynge was that worde/ ād that worde was with god: and god was thatt worde. The ſame was in the begynnynge wyth god. All thyngſ were made by it/ and with out it/ was made noo thige/ that made was. In it was lyfe/ And lyfe was the light of mē/ And the light ſhyneth ī darcknes/ ād darcknes cōprehēded it not.

There was a mā ſent from god/ whoſe name was Jhon. The ſame cā as a witnes/ to beare witnes of the light/ that all men through hī myght beleve. He was nott that light: but to beare witnes of the light. That was a true light/ which lighteneth all men that come īto the worlde. He was in the worlde/ ād the worlde by hī was made: and the worlde knewe hym not.

He cā īto his awne/ ād his receaved hī not. vnto as meny as receaved hī/ gave he power to be the ſōnes of god: ī that they beleved ō his name: which were borne not of bloude nor of the will of the fleſſhe/ nor yet of the will of men: but of god.

And that worde was made fleſſhe/ and dwelt amonge vs/ and we ſawe the glory off yt/ as the glory off the only begotten ſonne off the father/

Image Source ✸ Peter Schöffer & William Tyndale.

1529 – Luther and Zwingli meet to try and unify Protestants, but cannot agree their differences

1526

Anabaptist Movement is Born

Inspired by Luther's dissent, the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli forms the Anabaptists, denouncing the doctrine of baptism in children and advocating for adult baptisms when they are old enough to confess their sins.

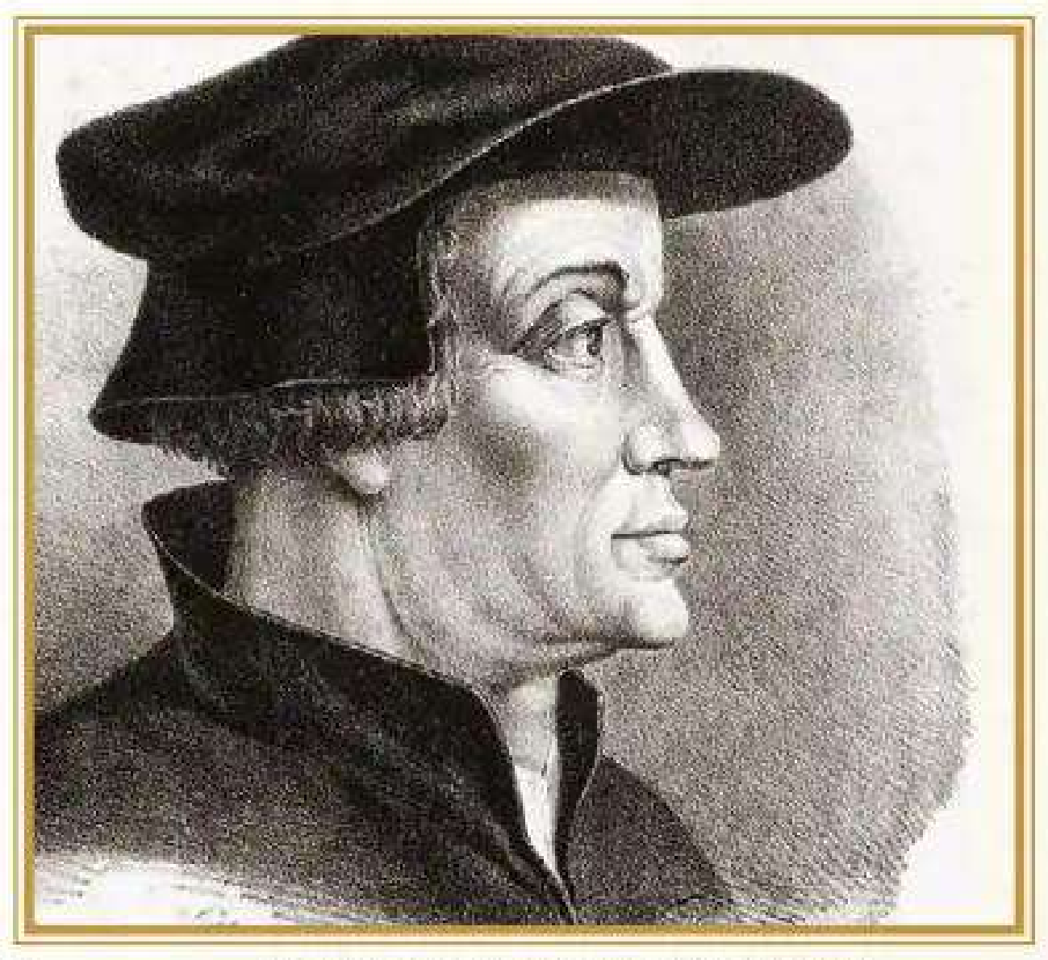
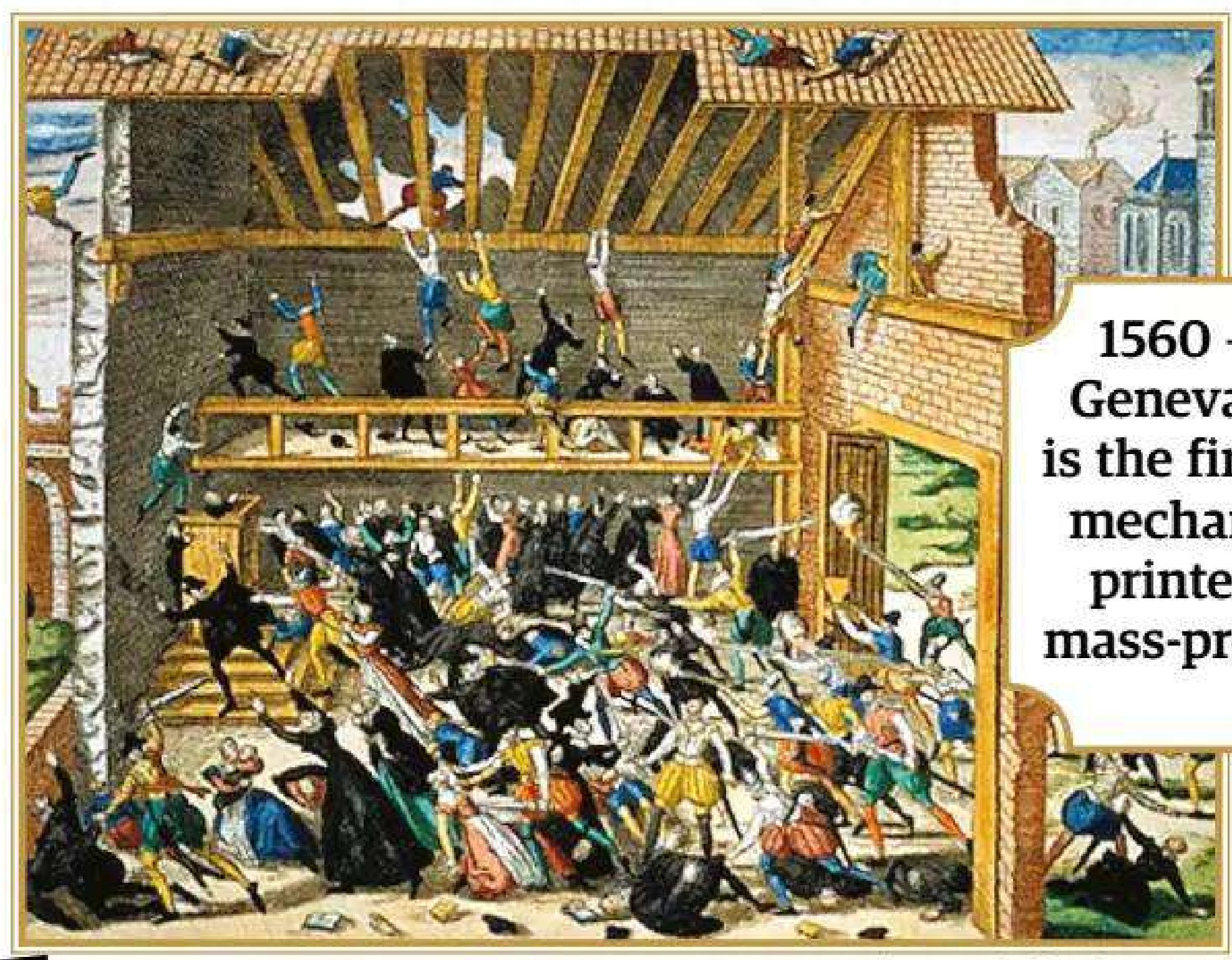


Image Source ✸ Georg Osterwald.

1525

The Edict of Nantes

Following the persecution of the Protestant Huguenots, King Henry IV of France grants them religious toleration. It brings civil order but is revoked by Henry's grandson, Louis, in 1685.



1560 - The Geneva Bible is the first to be mechanically printed and mass-produced

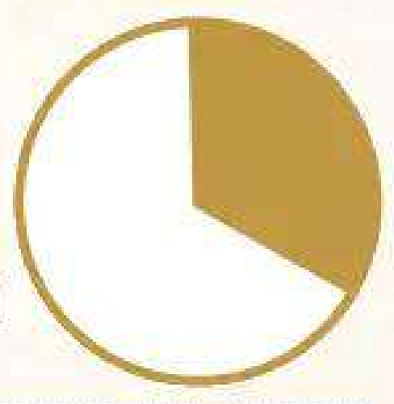
Image Source ✸ Hogenberg end of 16th century.

1598

The Thirty Years' War

The war actually lasts **29 YEARS, 11 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS & 1 DAY**

Between **25-40%** of the German population are killed



The Holy Roman Empire consists of approximately **1,000** semi-autonomous states

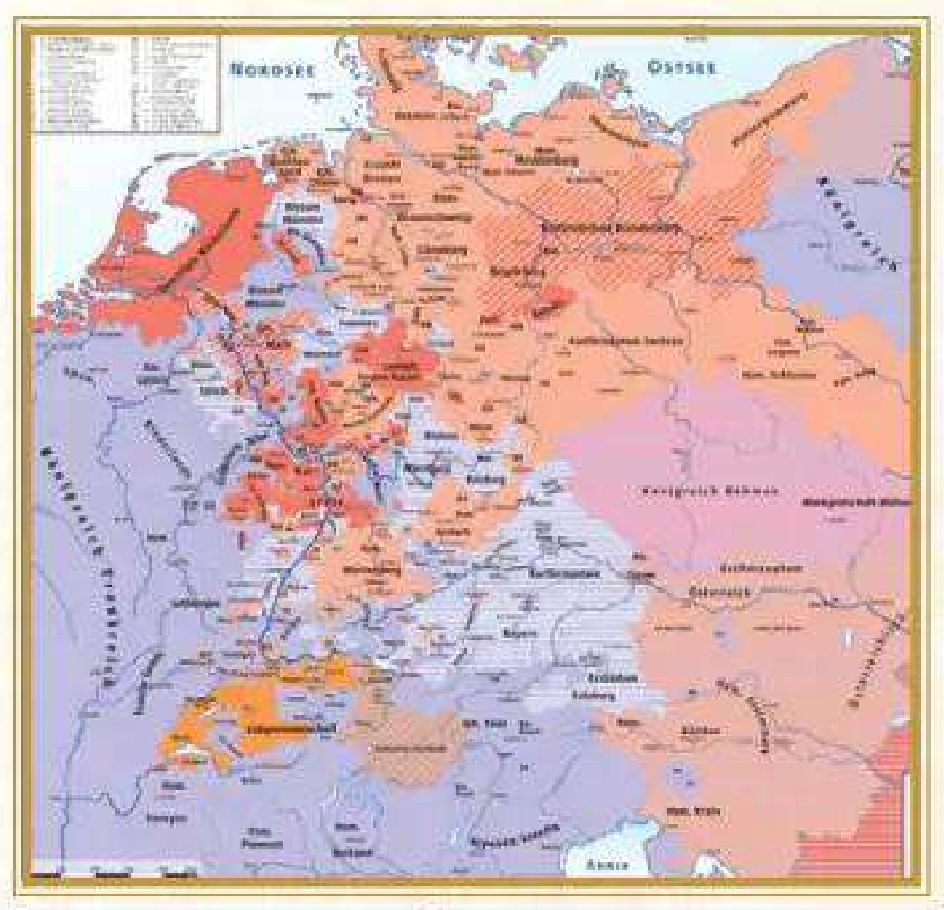


Image Source ✸ Ziegelbrenner.

1618-1648

Thirty Years' War Ends

The Treaty of Westphalia ends a destructive conflict between Catholics and Protestants from across Europe – mainly in Germany. It changes the European map and religious tolerance forever.

Image Source ✸ Museo del Prado.

1648

WAGING WAR

Exactly why did a book preaching peace and love divide people against each other?

Once the canon of scripture had been generally accepted in the Western Church it became a 'sacred text'. That is to say, this library of ancient writings was regarded as divinely inspired, authoritative and above contradiction. However, they remained documents written by different people at different times; documents that had been passed down from generation to generation, painstakingly hand copied over and over again in Greek and Hebrew. So, while the Bible was God-inspired it was also man-made. God cannot make mistakes. Men can - and do.

It was the scholar ascetic Jerome (347-420 CE) who, under pressure from Pope Damasus I produced the complete translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate). He worked thoroughly, travelling widely and consulting the most reliable texts he could find. Not only did he seek out, in various monasteries and libraries, the earliest documents available, he also decided which of the many early Jewish and Christian texts used in different churches actually merited inclusion in the 'canon', the official Bible. Henceforth, the Catholic Church endorsed the Vulgate as the infallible text. Throughout the Middle Ages, generations of scholars based their theological studies and their definition of doctrine on this text.

However, one cause for concern was that, from time to time, early and/or better manuscripts came to light that varied in minor ways from Jerome's version. This became a serious issue after the Muslim conquest of the eastern Christian empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Scholars fleeing from the enemy arrived in the West, bringing with them precious and rare manuscripts never seen in Europe before. This made a double impact on the scholarly world: it provided more texts for comparison with the Vulgate, and it inspired a more detailed study of the ancient languages in which the Bible was written. By this time the authority of the papacy had become inseparably bound up with the authority of the Vulgate. Anyone touting different interpretations was denounced as a heretic.

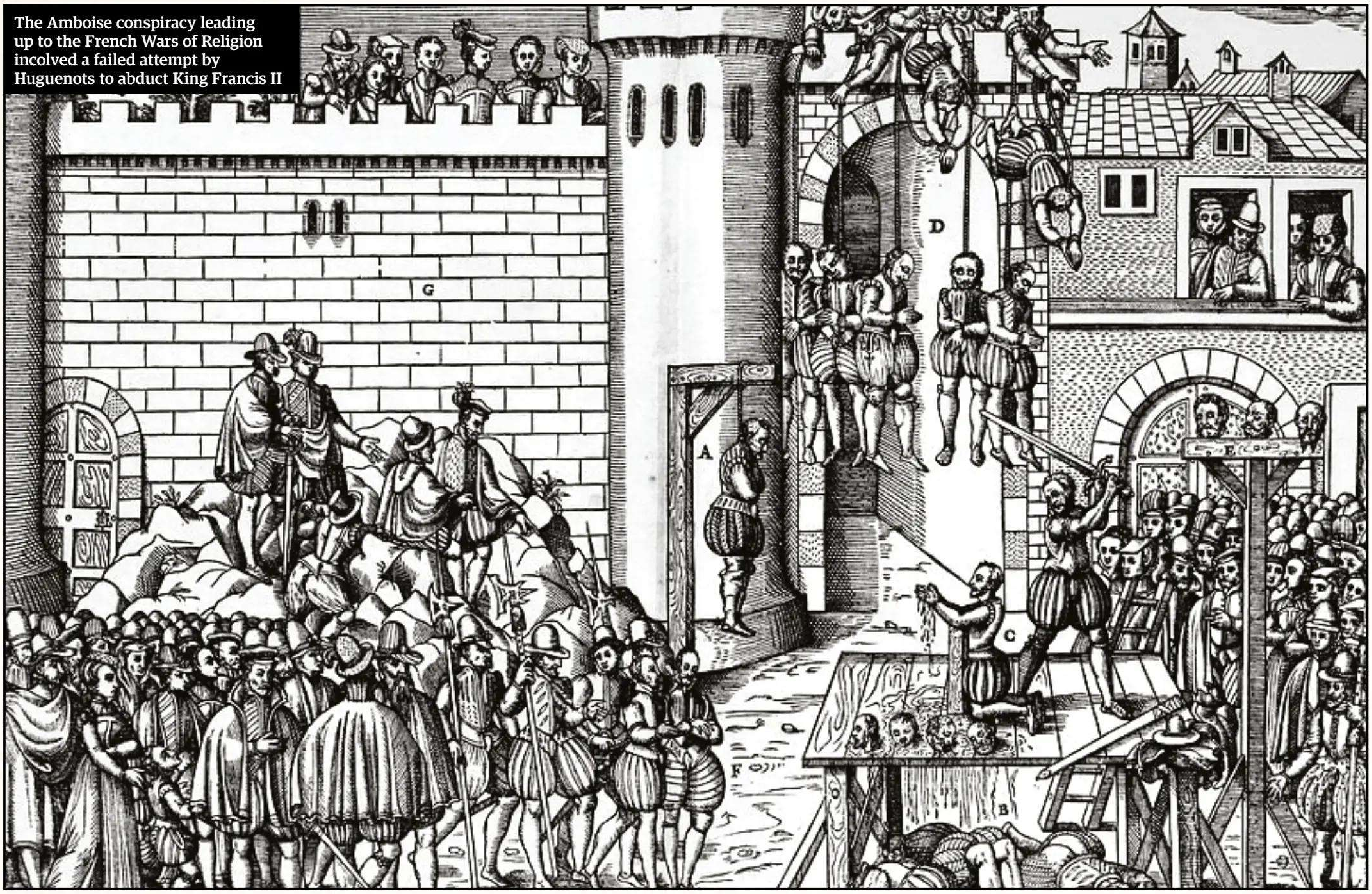
DEALING WITH DEVIANTS

The mention of the word 'heresy' obliges us to take a few steps backwards in time. The Church has always had heretics. The term itself comes from a Greek word meaning 'choice'. Heretics were people who had chosen, for their own reasons, to believe teachings at variance with what the authorities in Rome decreed. Those authorities had various ways of dealing with variants. They could impose acts of penance. They could isolate offenders in monasteries to prevent the spread of their ideas. They could hand over those convicted in church courts to the secular authorities to be imprisoned or executed. In extreme cases, when heretical movements had got out of hand, they called kings and their subjects to wage war and exterminate those undermining Christian society.

There were various reasons why religious enthusiasts opposed the Church hierarchy. Often heresy began with rejection of a church leadership

> *"Anyone touting different interpretations was denounced as a heretic"*

The plundering of a Dominican convent during the Peasants' War, as painted by Carl von Häberlin in 1858



The Amboise conspiracy leading up to the French Wars of Religion incolved a failed attempt by Huguenots to abduct King Francis II

> *"In extreme cases, they called kings and their subjects to wage war and exterminate those undermining Christian society"*

that had become corrupt. Rebels complained that popes, bishops and even parish priests were more interested in power and wealth than in caring for the spiritual needs of the people. The critics saw themselves as reformers, preaching a gospel of simplicity and humility.

This led some heretic groups to reject basic Christian doctrine. For example, the Cathars of North Italy and southern France evolved a dualistic theology in which the God of the Old Testament was evil and the God of the New Testament was good. The pope ordered a crusade against the Cathars and conflict existed from the mid-12th to the early 14th century. The more far-reaching Waldensian heresy, meanwhile, made no assault on basic doctrine but concentrated on church practices that enhanced the powers of the priesthood, such as confession and transubstantiation (the belief that the celebrant at mass could actually change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ).

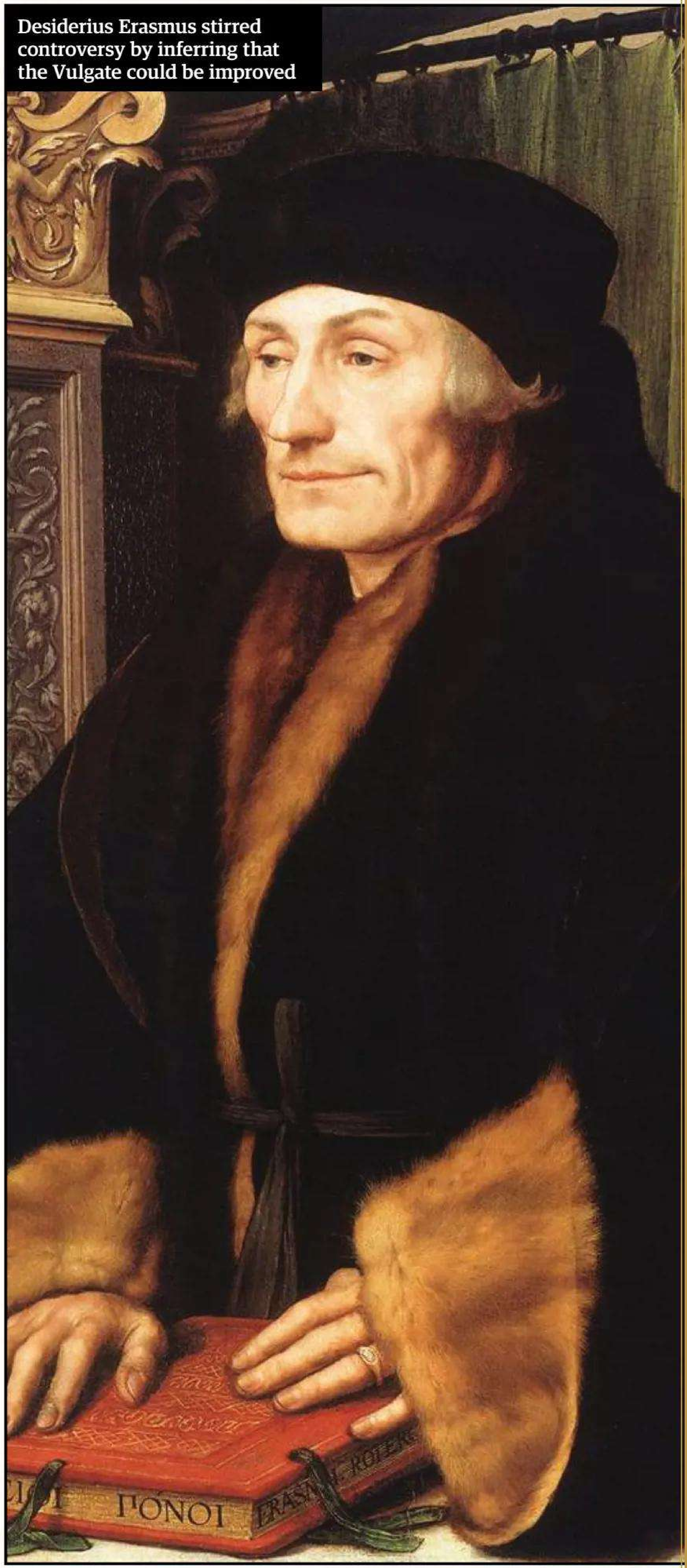
THE BIBLE VS CHURCH MOVEMENTS

However, these and other unorthodox movements did involve comparing and contrasting official doctrine and practice with the teaching of the Bible. For centuries the Catholic hierarchy relied upon the educational gap between clergy and laity. Few lay people could read Latin, the language of scholars and church officials, and not many were literate in their own vernacular languages. But the times were changing. Fifteenth-century heretical movements were claiming biblical support for their challenge of Catholic leadership and were sponsoring unauthorised translations.

In centres as far apart as Oxford and Prague, two Bible-based protest movements flagged up what would become a 'Bible versus Church' movement. The 14th-century Oxford professor, John Wycliffe (1330-84), launched a protest against the moral failings and political power of the clergy. As part of his campaign, he urged all literate English people to study the Bible for themselves so that they could see clearly the gap that had opened up between how their priests behaved and what the Christian foundation document actually said. To enable them to do this, he began to write an English translation of the Vulgate. The work was continued after his death by his followers, dubbed 'Lollards' by their enemies. This underground movement continued throughout the 15th century and well into the 1500s. English church leaders responded by banning all unauthorised translations and parliament passed one of the most draconian laws ever to appear on the statute book in De Heretico Comburendo, which labelled Lollardy as seditious and mandated death by burning for all convicted Lollards. In Prague, capital of Bohemia, Jan Huss (1369-1415), rector of the university, took up Wycliffe's teaching and campaigned for the use of the Czech language for the Bible and all church services. Hus was summoned to a church council in Constance (1415) to discuss his views, under the promise of a safe conduct. Once there, he was charged with heresy and burned at the stake. This sparked off the Hussite Wars (1419-34). Although the Hussites were split into rival camps by the conflict, their basic beliefs spread rapidly through Bohemia and neighbouring lands over the next two centuries.

STUDYING THE SACRED TEXT

By the early 16th century it was not only religious radicals who were proclaiming a 'back to the Bible' message. Scholars across Europe were bringing open minds to the study of the sacred text. The Renaissance encouraged the growing interest in the study of Greek and Hebrew. In 1516 the leading philosopher of the age, Desiderius Erasmus, grasped the nettle of the Vulgate. His Novum Instrumentum presented the Greek New Testament according to the best available texts, together with a new Latin translation. What was shocking about this to traditionalists was the suggestion that St Jerome's text could be improved on – that it contained errors. Erasmus did not shrink from pointing out what some of those errors were. For example, the Greek word 'metanoeite' had been rendered into Latin as poenitentiam agite, 'do penance'. This meant 'perform the rituals prescribed by the Church for obtaining restitution'. Erasmus pointed out that the sense of the Greek was 'repent', experience an inner change – something much more personal and not requiring priestly intermediaries. Erasmus went even further; he called for vernacular translations of scripture and declared, quite openly, that he believed the sacred text should be available for every literate man or women to read. Within a decade, scholars in various countries were turning Erasmus's dream into reality by producing Bibles that educated people in Germany, England, France and elsewhere could read for themselves. This was the biggest single factor that changed the religious and social life of the continent. It released a new kind of individualism: if ordinary men and women were able to establish their own relationship with God simply by reading his written word, what might they discover therein about the nature of priesthood, kingship and law? To take just one example, Jesus taught his followers not to swear oaths to buttress the truth of what they said, "Just say 'yes' or 'no', he commented – 'anything



Desiderius Erasmus stirred controversy by inferring that the Vulgate could be improved

A Dissenting Manifesto

In 1395, the Wycliffites, or Lollards, a disparate movement of English biblicists, published, by means of placards nailed to church doors, their complaints about the religious establishment. Their Twelve Conclusions stated:

1 The church has become too involved in worldly politics.

2 Priestly ordination has no biblical warrant.

3 Clerical celibacy encourages the sin of sodomy.

4 The doctrine of transubstantiation encourages the worship of material objects.

5 Clerical exorcism and hallowing is a form of witchcraft.

6 High-ranking churchmen should not also be senior officers of state.

7 Specific prayers for dead individuals discriminate against the rest of the blessed departed and demanding payment for such prayers amounts to bribery and corruption.

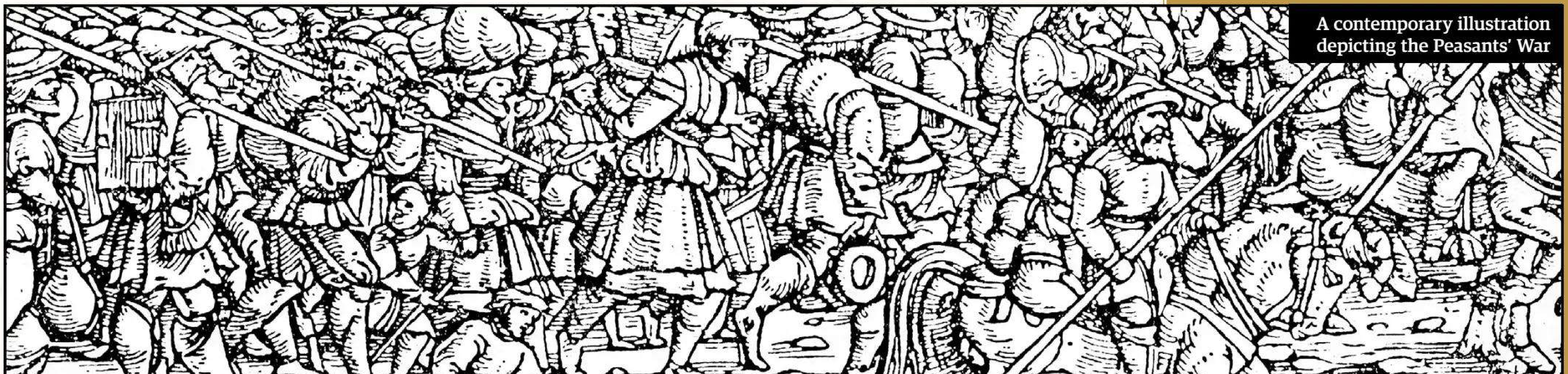
8 Pilgrimages and veneration of relics are both ineffectual and idolatrous.

9 Priestly confession and absolution usurp the authority held by God alone.

10 Because Christians are called to demonstrate love and forgiveness they should not engage in warfare. Wars waged with religious justification (ie crusades) are especially blasphemous.

11 Vows of female celibacy encourage covert sexual activity and abortion.

12 Too much attention is given to expressing religious devotion through the creation of beautiful objects instead of practising godliness.



A contemporary illustration depicting the Peasants' War

"The word of God in the common tongue was an intellectual intoxicant"

else you say comes from the Evil One'" (Matthew 5, 33-7). But in 16th century Europe, all contractual relationships were based on the swearing of oaths. To refuse to reinforce a declaration of interest by invoking the name of God or specific saints was to opt out of society. Religious radicals who took this stance ran the risk of being tried for sedition.

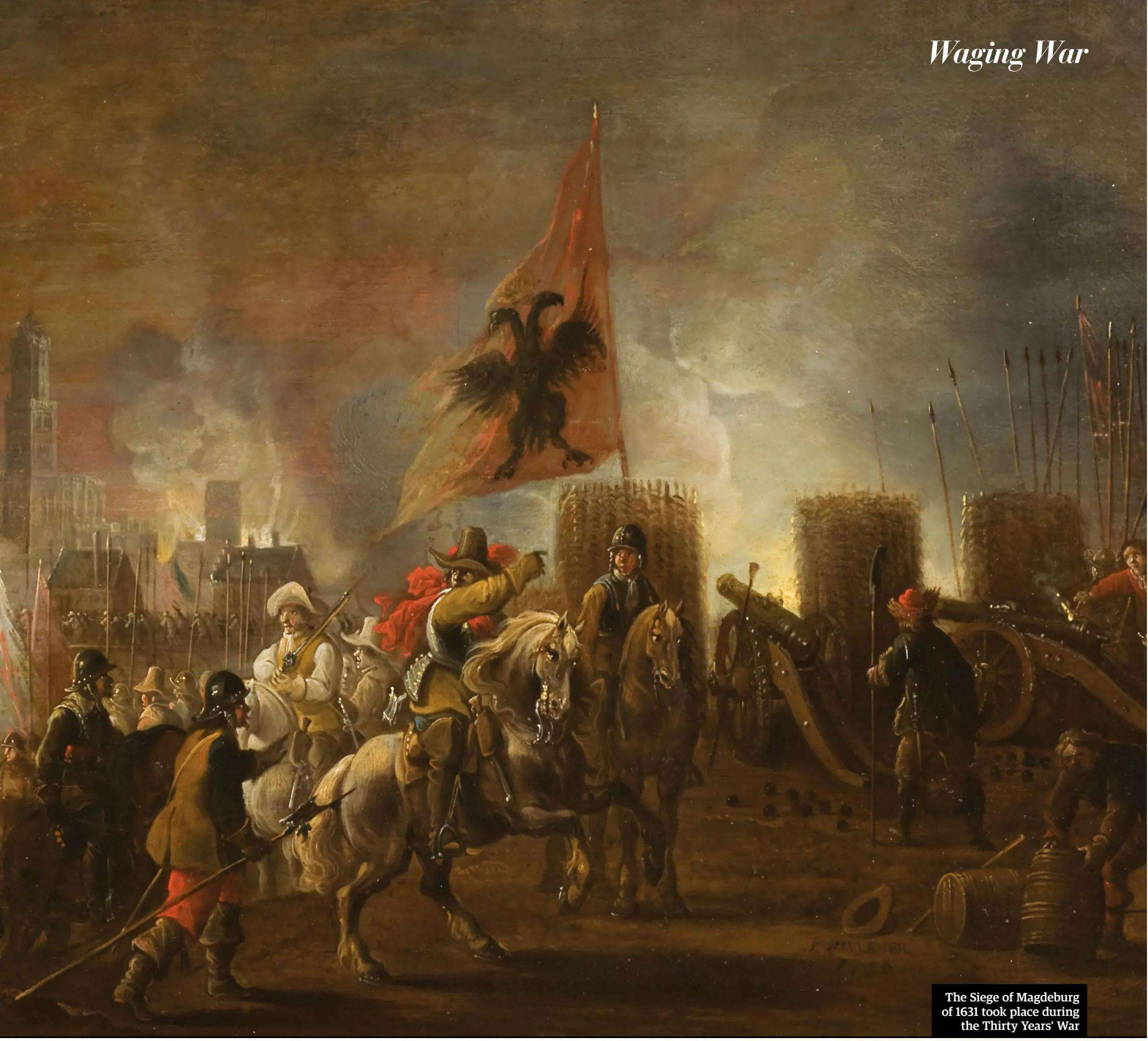
SCRIPTURE'S SECRETS

The word of God in the common tongue was an intellectual intoxicant. It appeared at a time when the new invention of movable type printing was making books of all kinds available to a growing audience. Every major development in human communication - newspapers, telephone, radio, internet, etc - is an exciting event with incalculable consequences. So it was with printed books. They gave an explosive impetus to education. European societies rapidly became more literate. And the book above all others that people wanted to read for themselves was the Bible. They wanted to know what the text said and, more importantly, what it meant. Interpretation was the key that unlocked scripture's secrets.

The library of history, poetry, philosophy, biography, prophecy and law was a complex collection that needed to be explained to people without theological training. If the priestly interpreters were not trusted to do this, who was?

The answer was a new breed of Protestant preachers. The first was Martin Luther (1483-1546). This Saxon monk's challenge to papal authority stemmed from his own anguished spiritual history. That drove him back to the study of the Greek and Hebrew originals and this, in turn, brought him to an understanding of salvation depending, not on the observance of religious rituals, but on personal response, by faith, to the initiative taken by a loving God in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this he was at one with Erasmus but he went on, in his famous *95 Theses*, to draw conclusions that, if true, undermined the authority of the papacy. Luther made his own German translation of the Bible (New Testament 1522, Old Testament 1534). The result was not only a clear exposition but a classic of German literature.

It contained more than the plain text; it elaborated on the original in explanatory notes that emphasised the core evangelical (ie gospel-based) doctrines that Luther understood as the central thread of the entire biblical narrative.



The Siege of Magdeburg of 1631 took place during the Thirty Years' War

FUEL TO THE FIRE

It would be wrong to say that the Bible caused the social upheaval and warfare that devastated Europe for the next century and a half. What it did do was act as a stimulant for many conflicts that already existed. The Holy Roman Empire was a patchwork of principalities and free cities, each with its own political agenda in relation to imperial and papal activities within its territory. Some remained loyal to the papacy. Others embraced Lutheranism as their state religion. Luther had been condemned at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and, in distant Rome, the pope clamoured for him and his followers to be exterminated. North of the Alps the situation was not that simple.

"Because now the Common Man everywhere thirsts after God's Word and the Gospel, which... have recently spread much more widely than before... If we accept, approve or allow to be enforced even the slightest barrier to the Gospel's spread, the honourable, free and Imperial cities... could not only not enforce such a law, but they would doubtless provoke widespread disturbances, rebellion, murder, bloodshed, yes, total ruin and every sort of evil..."

That was the official response from one of the imperial cities. The 'Common Man' was nursing numerous grievances against his secular and religious overlords. Rebellion was in the air and the 'freedom' Luther seemed to be teaching was grasped by popular leaders as providing divine sanction for the forcible overthrow of the religious and secular hierarchies oppressing the people. In 1524-5 violence broke out in several parts of central Germany. The disorganised and poorly armed working people were easily overwhelmed by troops sent against them by their overlords (Luther denounced the rebels and urged their suppression) but the cost of the Peasants' War was horrendous. At least 100,000 simple people were slaughtered. It was one of the worst bloodbaths in European history. More than that, it gave rise to a number of radical sects (who are sometimes lumped together as 'Anabaptists') whose teaching was based on wild apocalypticism and extremist interpretation of Bible passages.

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

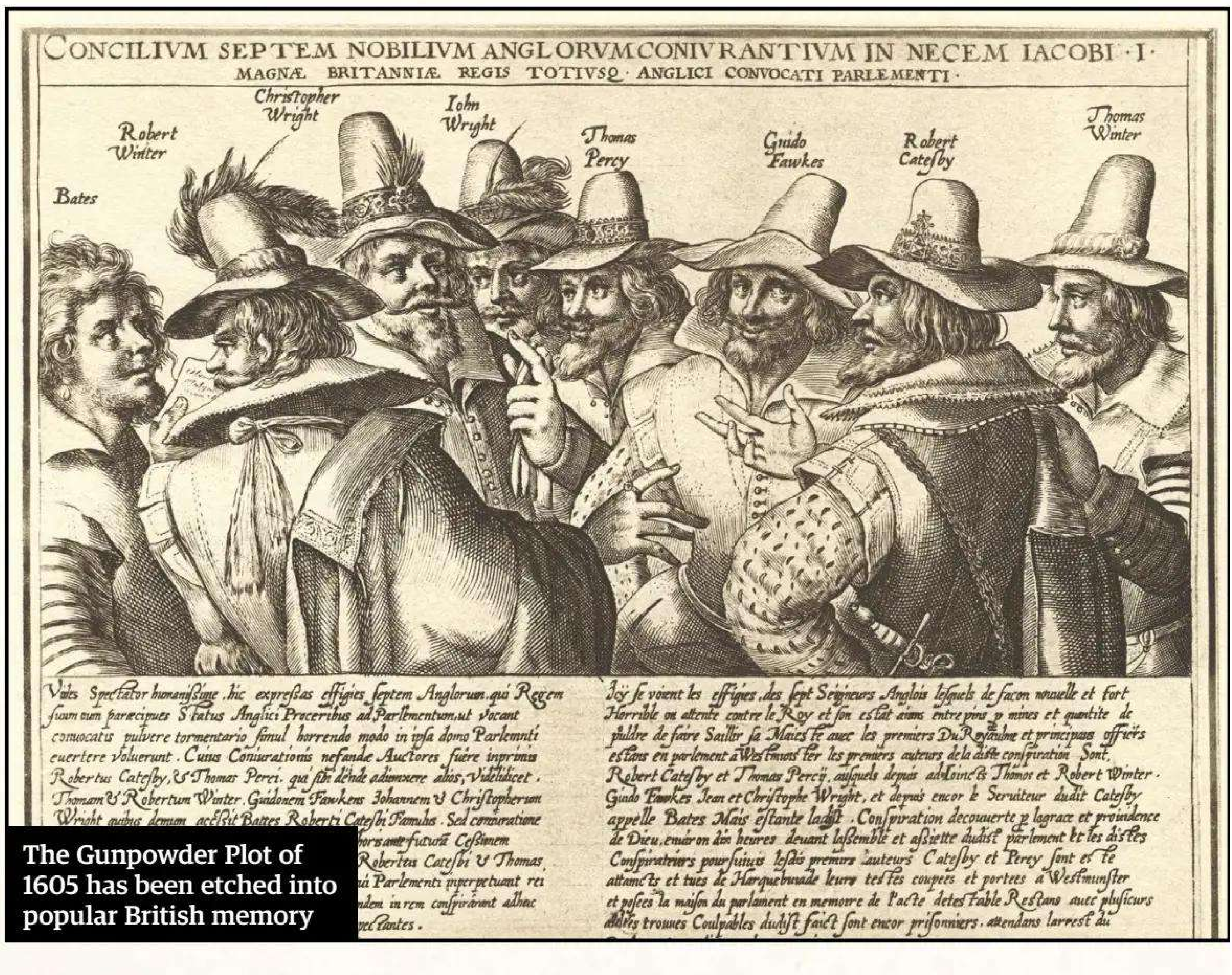
It was not only trouble-making revolutionaries who deviated from Luther's understanding of the Bible. Because the reformers who would come to be called

What's in a Name?

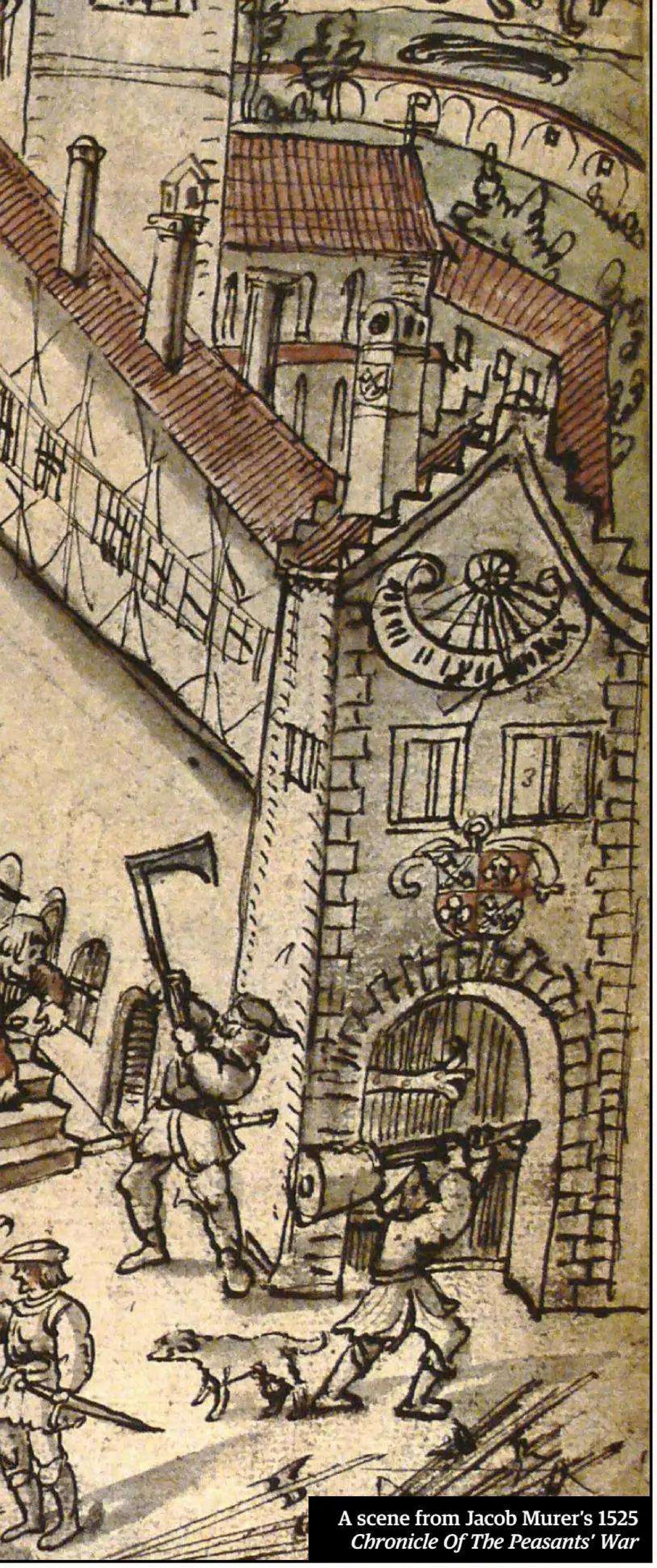
Breaking from Catholicism

For centuries individuals and breakaway groups had protested about the teachings and/or practices of the Western Church but dissent came to a head in the 1520s. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, the teachings of Martin Luther were outlawed in the Holy Roman Empire but they spread throughout many states of the Empire as princes and leaders of free cities accepted 'evangelical' teaching (ie beliefs based on study of the Bible, rather than doctrines of the Catholic Church).

To prevent divisions within the Empire – and particularly to maintain unity in the face of the Muslim threat from the East – the emperor was inclined to permit a measure of toleration but Catholic reactionaries exerted mounting pressure. In 1529 a meeting of the imperial diet was summoned at Speyer to co-ordinate action against the Turkish advance towards Hungary. The Catholic majority now demanded a tougher religious line, specifically rejecting the right of state rulers to decide the religion to be pursued in their territories. Against this, six evangelical princes and the evangelical leaders of 14 cities signed a document against being forced to endorse teaching dictated by Rome. "In matters which concern God's honour and salvation and the eternal life of our souls," they insisted, "everyone must stand and give account before God for himself." The document was called a 'Protestation'. A new word had been added to all the languages of Europe.


CONCILIVM SEPTEM NOBILIVM ANGLORVM CONIVRANTIVM IN NECEM IACOBI · I ·
MAGNÆ BRITANNIÆ REGIS TOTIVSQ · ANGLICI CONVOCATI PARLEMENTI ·
Bates
Robert Winter
Christopher Wright
Iohn Wright
Thomas Percy
Guido Fawkes
Robert Catesby
Thomas Winter

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 has been etched into popular British memory



A scene from Jacob Murer's 1525 *Chronicle Of The Peasants' War*

"The kings of France and Spain used force to bring the 'heretics' to heel"

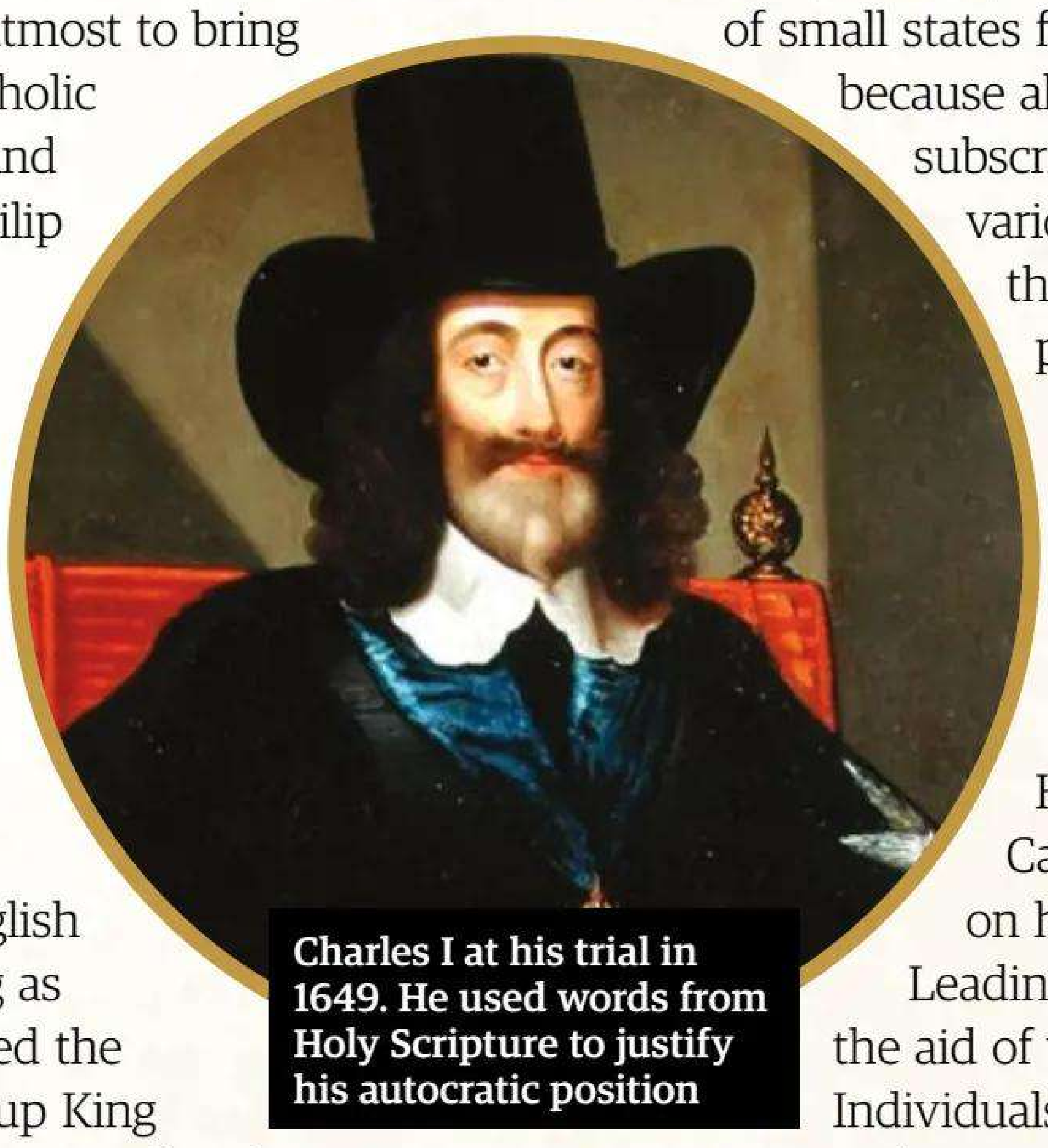
'Protestants' believed in the personal revelation given by God to all who sincerely studied his word, they recognised no unifying human authority: there was no 'Protestant pope'. Various preachers and pastors emerged in different places and, though they agreed on the basics of Protestant theology, there were sufficient points of difference to prevent them uniting. It was all a matter of 'interpretation, interpretation, interpretation'. In 1529, a meeting of leading Protestant theologians was called at Marburg in the principality of Hesse. They reached agreement on 14 out of 15 points of doctrine. The last point dealt with the Communion service, or Lord's Supper. Luther insisted on taking a literal meaning of Jesus' words: "This is my body; this is my blood". He believed passionately that a physical change took place in the elements. In contrast, the other theologians opted for some kind of symbolical meaning to the words.

The leading protestant thinker of the next generation was John Calvin (1509-64), a French scholar who was forced to flee persecution and settled in Geneva. There he published a comprehensive manual of Protestant doctrine that was an answer to the *Summa Theologiae* of the 13th-century scholar, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). Calvin's *Institutes Of The Christian Religion* was a systematic exposition of biblical teaching. But, again, it did not please all evangelical Christians. Some, for example, could not accept Calvin's belief in double predestination, the doctrine that God pre-ordained some people to be saved and others to be damned.

By the second half of the century Calvinism had become a major force in France (where the Protestants were called Huguenots) and the Low Countries. The kings of France and Spain (which owned the southern Netherlands), egged on by the pope, used force to bring the 'heretics' to heel. The French Wars of Religion lasted from 1562 to 1598. The Dutch War of Independence extended from 1568 to 1648.

GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT

Even countries that avoided major war on their own soil could not entirely escape violent conflict over religion. England opted for its own brand of Calvinism in the reign of Edward VI (1547-53) but successive popes did their utmost to bring the nation back into the Catholic fold. They sponsored plots and backed the Spanish king, Philip II, to invade the country in 1558. As late as 1605 it was passionate devotion to papal authority that fuelled the most notorious mass assassination attempt in English history. "Remember, remember the fifth of November, gunpowder, treason and plot" - so ran the rhyme English children were soon chanting as every autumn they celebrated the failure of a scheme to blow up King James I and most of the nation's political leaders. But while we recall such spectacular events as the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, we should not forget the numerous little wars throughout the 16th century that were unsuccessfully waged in Ireland by an English government determined to Protestantise Catholic Ireland.



Charles I at his trial in 1649. He used words from Holy Scripture to justify his autocratic position

Nor should we lose sight of the fact that it was vernacular Bibles that kept alive the faith of individuals and inspired many to challenge the rival authority of the pope in Rome. By the end of the 16th century readers from Scotland to Hungary, France to Poland, Switzerland to Norway were able to study the sacred text in their own languages. And in 1610, English Catholic scholars working in exile in Rheims published a papally-approved Bible for the use of their missionaries working in England. Ruefully they confessed in their preface:

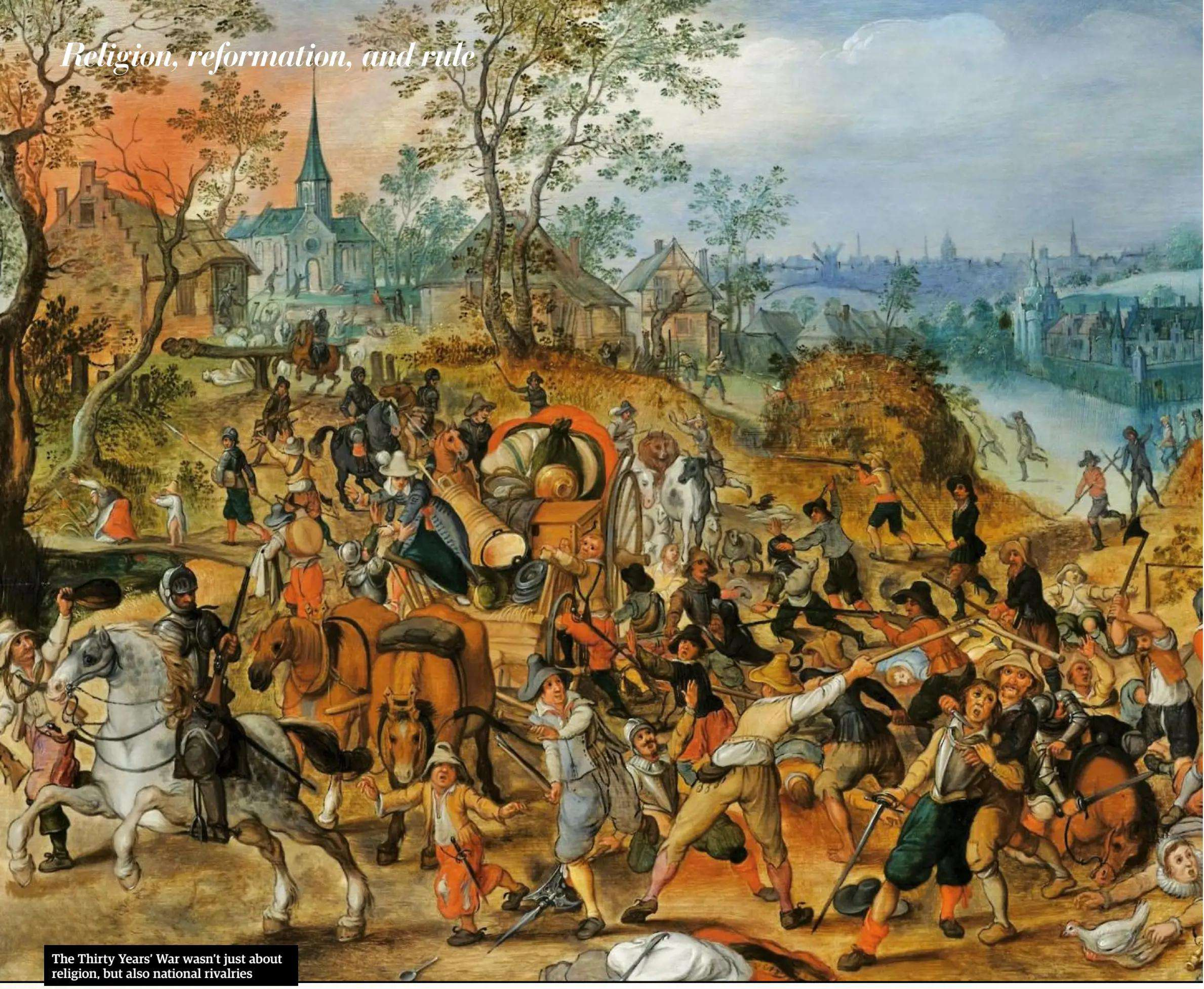
"We do not publish upon erroneous opinion of necessity, that the holy Scriptures should always be in our mother tongue, or that they ought, or were ordained by God, to be read indifferently of all... but upon special consideration of the present time, state and condition of our country, unto which divers things are either necessary, or profitable and medicinal now, that otherwise in the peace of the church were neither much requisite, nor perchance wholly tolerable."

RELIGION AS AN EXCUSE

With Europe now divided into Catholic and Protestant camps, it was unlikely that further military conflict could be avoided but the continent was about to suffer the worst war in its history. The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) was not just about religion. It was about national rivalries, the future of the Holy Roman Empire, the ambitions of mercenary military leaders and the aspirations of small states for self-determination. But because all the peoples involved subscribed to one or other of the various brands of Christianity that had become established, participants claimed religious justification for their activities.

The papacy was desperate to regain the loyalty of Protestant states in northern Europe. The Holy Roman Emperor used Catholicism to impose unity on his crumbling domain. Leading Protestant states went to the aid of weaker Protestant nations. Individuals from several countries took up arms in what they believed was a holy cause. Without acknowledging the strength of religious feeling among the combatants it is impossible to understand the ferocity of the war or the appalling atrocities committed on both sides. This was Europe's last - and very much its worst - religious war.

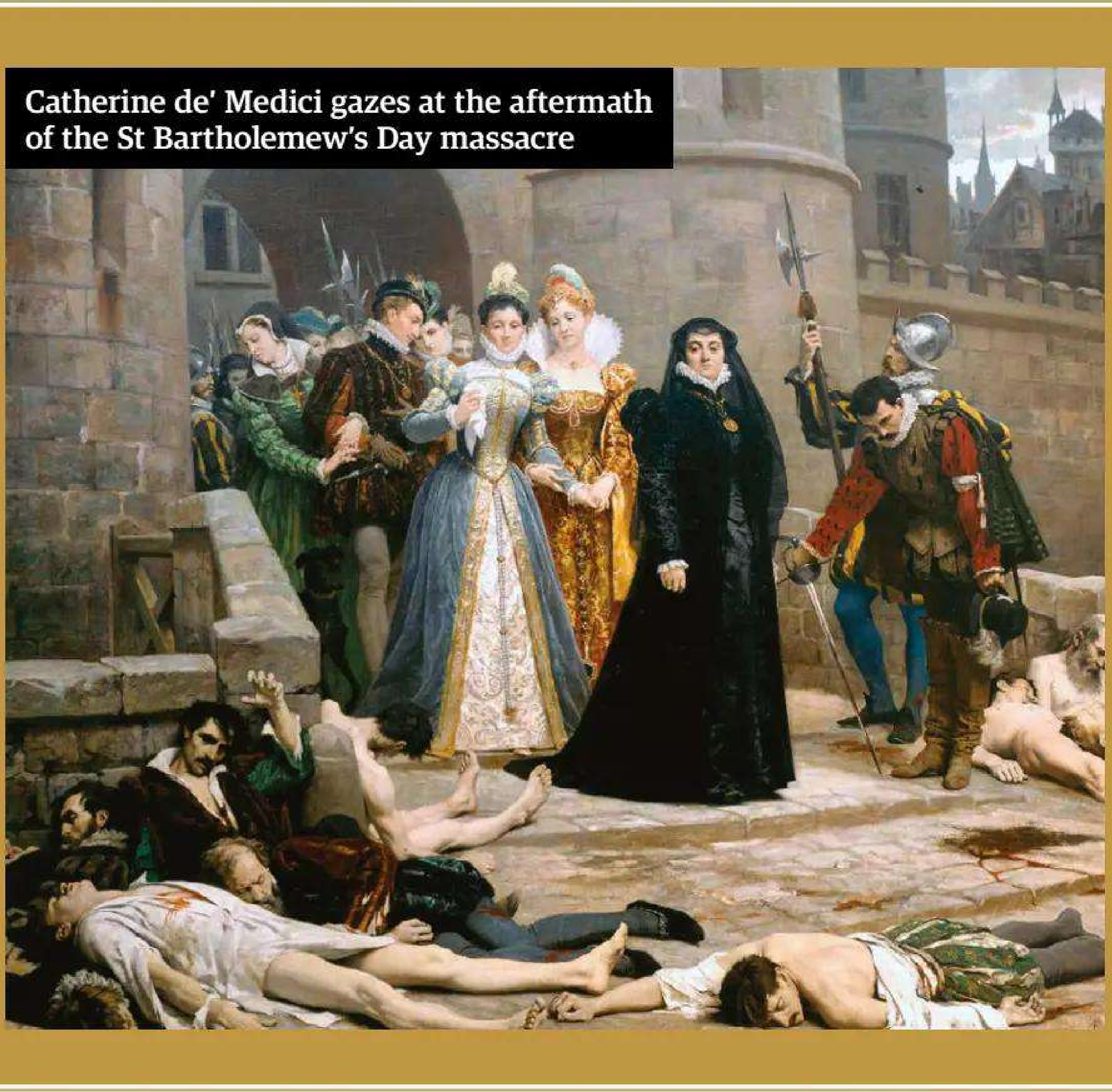
It began when the intensely pious Emperor Ferdinand II tried to end Hussite political influence in Bohemia. The councillors in Prague showed their contempt by throwing the imperial envoys from a high window in the town hall (an incident



The Thirty Years' War wasn't just about religion, but also national rivalries

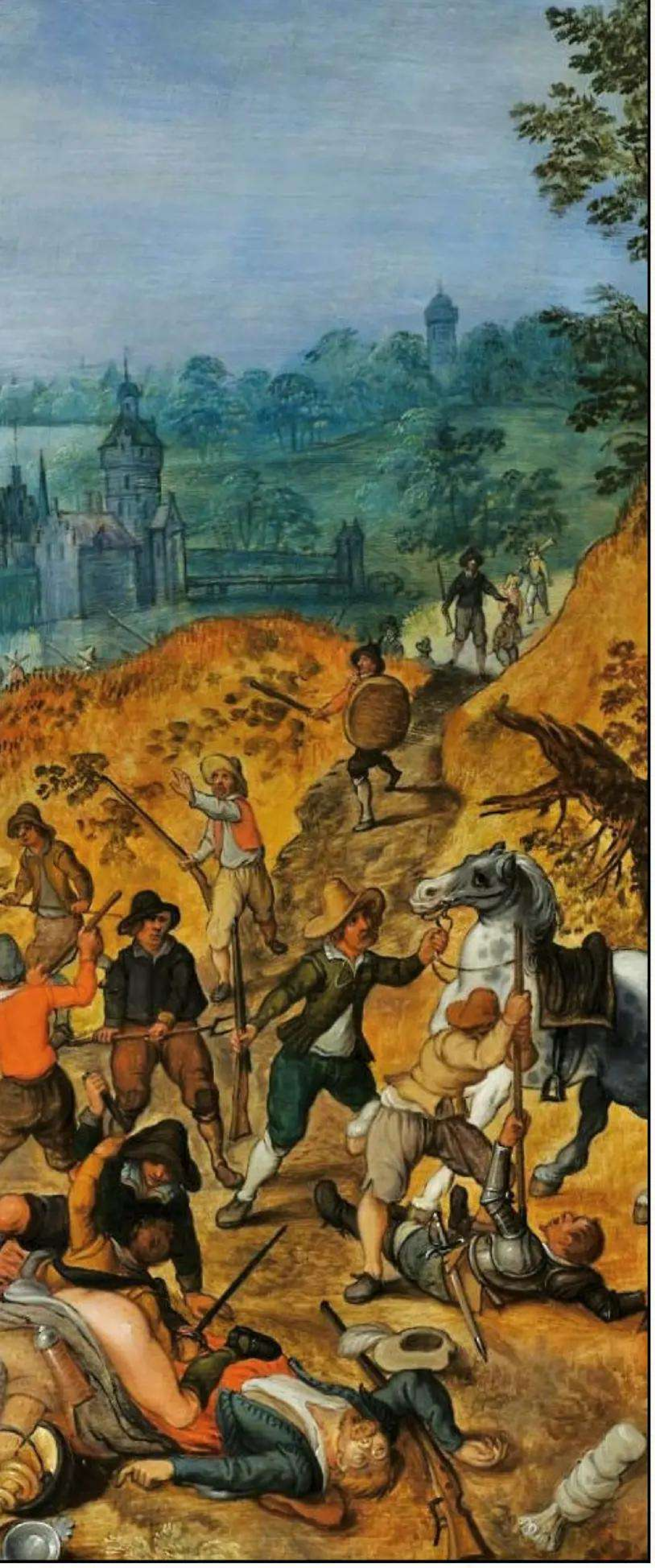
A French Bloodbath

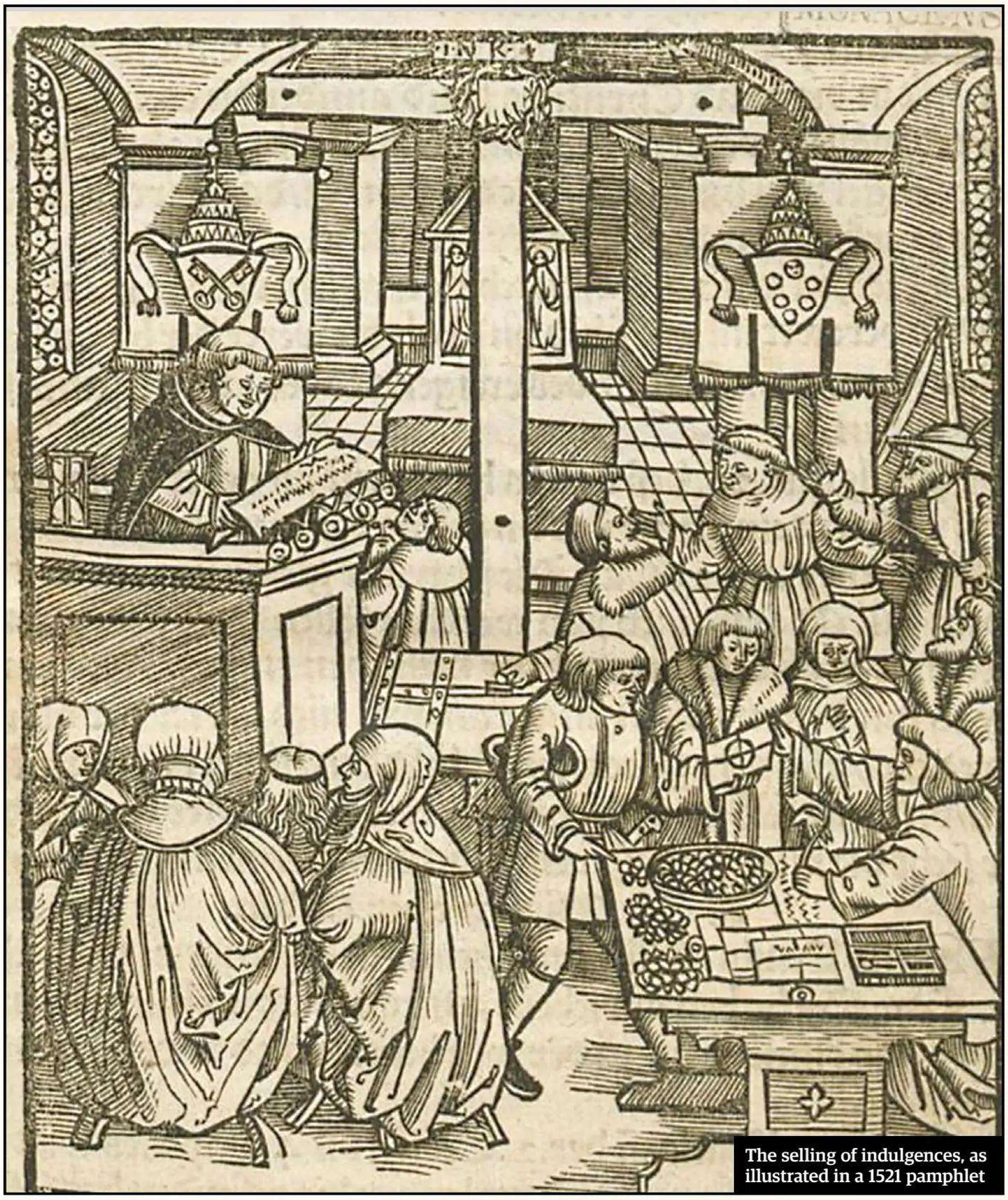
A right royal massacre



Catherine de' Medici gazes at the aftermath of the St Bartholemew's Day massacre

Nothing better illustrates the intense emotions stirred up by religious rivalry than the wave of hatred that swept through France in August 1572. National instability was fed by ineffective government, religious division and aristocratic rivalry. Charles IX (1550-74) had been king since the age of ten. His mother, Catherine de' Medici, acted as regent during her son's minority but effectively continued to be the real ruler, since Charles was mentally unstable. Staunchly Catholic herself, she was under pressure from noble factions supporting rival religious causes. French Calvinists (Huguenots) were making gains, particularly in the south of the country. Catherine was torn between the desire to restore peace to France and her alarm at this surge of Protestant success. She arranged a marriage between her daughter, Margaret, and Henry, King of Navarre, the Huguenot leader. At the same time, she planned the assassination of the prominent Protestant Admiral Gaspard de Coligny when he came to the celebration. The plot failed; Coligny was only wounded but this stirred the Huguenots and Catherine, fearing a backlash, sanctioned the Catholic leaders to strike first. On St Bartholomew's Day, 24 August, royal troops butchered several prominent Huguenots. Catholic mobs, taking their lead from the government, ran amok. The streets ran red with blood. The frenzy spread to other towns and did not stop until more than 5,000 French men, women and children had been butchered by their own neighbours.





The selling of indulgences, as illustrated in a 1521 pamphlet

know as the Defenestration of Prague). This led to a brief war and the crushing of the Bohemian nationalists at the Battle of the White Mountain (1620). Ferdinand followed this up with severe reprisals, including an order that all non-Catholics were to convert on pain of death. Over the next few years, Ferdinand launched a Catholic crusade aimed at recovering territories lost to Lutheran and Catholic regimes over the previous century. Aided by Spain and employing well-trained mercenary armies, he met with remarkable success. But his triumph was his undoing.

Alarmed by the Catholic threat, Protestant states – imperial principalities, the Dutch Republic and the Scandinavian nations – took a stance and lined up against the Catholic megalith. France, despite its predominantly Catholic stance, was wary of the growing power of its old rivals, Spain and the Empire, and actually came in on the Protestant side and nations like England and Scotland, though not formally engaged, sent volunteer armies to aid their co-religionists nonetheless.

The appearance of a brilliant military leader in Sweden proved to be a game changer. King Gustavus Adolphus (who was financially backed by France) joined the war in 1630. In a series of campaigns over the next four years, the Swedish-led coalition managed to wipe out many of the imperial gains, even though Gustavus Adolphus met his death at the Battle of Lützen (1632). The remaining years of the war resolved into a bruising dynastic/territorial contest between the French and the Habsburg rulers of Spain and the Empire. By the time all the contenders had fought themselves into a state of complete exhaustion, there were preachers on both sides so appalled by the violence, carnage and devastation that they believed they were witnessing Armageddon, prophesied in the Bible as the final battle between the forces of heaven and hell. Analysis by CV Wedgwood, the historian of the war, provides macabre details that help to explain this belief:

"At Frankfurt-on-the-Oder pestilence bred of the rotting bodies of the dead had overwhelmed the survivors. At Stettin and Spandau the Swedes had left the plague, in the towns of Durlach and Lorch, at Würzburg and in the whole province of Württemberg; at Bamberg the bodies lay unburied in the streets, and on both banks of the Rhine there was famine… The harvest of 1632 promised well, but in Bavaria and Swabia the passing troops trampled it down; in Bavaria there was neither corn left to grind nor seed to sow for the year to come; plague and famine wiped out whole villages, mad dogs attacked their masters, and the authorities posted men with guns to shoot down the raving victims before they could contaminate their fellows; hungry wolves abandoned the woods and mountains to roam through the deserted hamlets, devouring the dying and the dead."

CLASH OF AUTHORITY

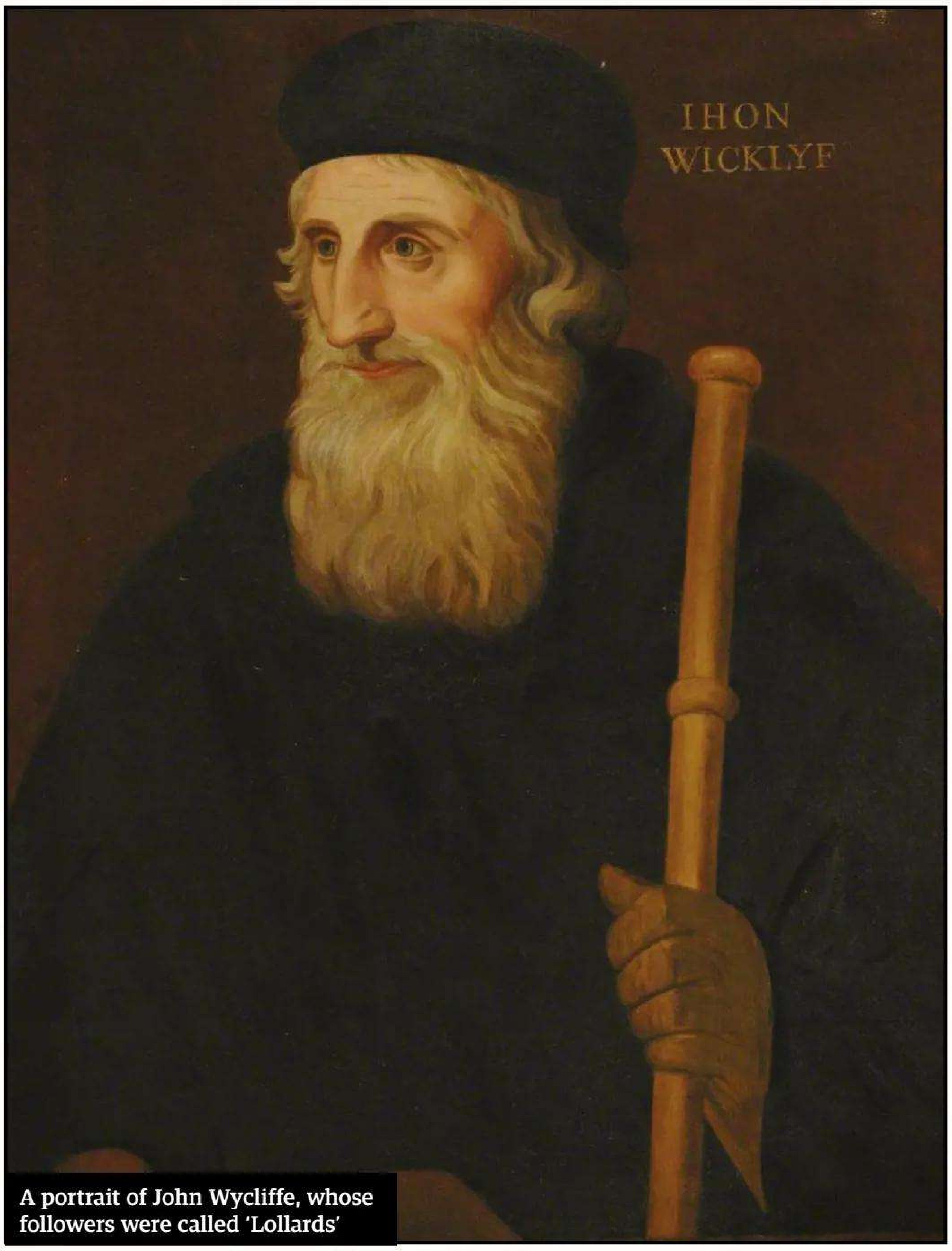
So, was all this misery and violence the fault of the Bible? Or, to put the question another way, how can the obscenities of 1618-1648 be squared with the gospel of peace and love? Clearly, national

Reformation Morphs into Revolution

Spreading the word of change

The sad career of Thomas Müntzer (c. 1489-1525) illustrates the confused and sometimes violent feelings just waiting to leap out like a jack-in-the-box when theologians like Luther turned the key. He was a mystic, a musician and a preacher who thrilled to the reformer's message. Driven by Lutheran teaching to turn away from Catholic dogma to the Bible, he drifted into interpretations of the text that were highly individualistic. He believed that Christians should be led by the Spirit of God, rather than the word of God, that the end of the world was at hand and that true believers were to prepare the way for the final showdown between good and evil. That meant that they should turn against the corrupt church and state, by such activities as destroying religious images and refusing to pay taxes. This message appeared to give divine sanction to social revolution and appealed to people at the bottom of the social scale who felt themselves downtrodden and ill-used. Müntzer thus became one of the zealous standard bearers of the Peasants' War (1524-5), going on a preaching tour throughout south west Germany before returning to Mühlhausen where he formed an armed band to challenge the superior forces of the ruling class. Eventually his rebel rabble met up with their 'worldly' enemy at Frankenhausen on 11 May 1525. It was no contest. Six thousand of Müntzer's men were killed in a matter of minutes. The leader fled and was subsequently captured, tortured and executed.

A statue of Müntzer stands in Mühlhausen



A portrait of John Wycliffe, whose followers were called 'Lollards'

rivalries, personal ambitions and the lure of military plunder played major roles in the Thirty Years' War. It is also true that religion was used as a banner by various parties to rally military, political and diplomatic support. Then again, whatever motives participants claimed justified them taking part were soon lost sight of once rival commanders had 'let slip the dogs of war'.

A hungry army, marching its way through villages and homelands, had very little interest in the religious beliefs of the farmers and peasants who stood between them and their next meal. However, in forming our historical judgements on their actions, we should not forget that the separation of church and state that we take for granted was still a couple of hundred years down the road in 1648.

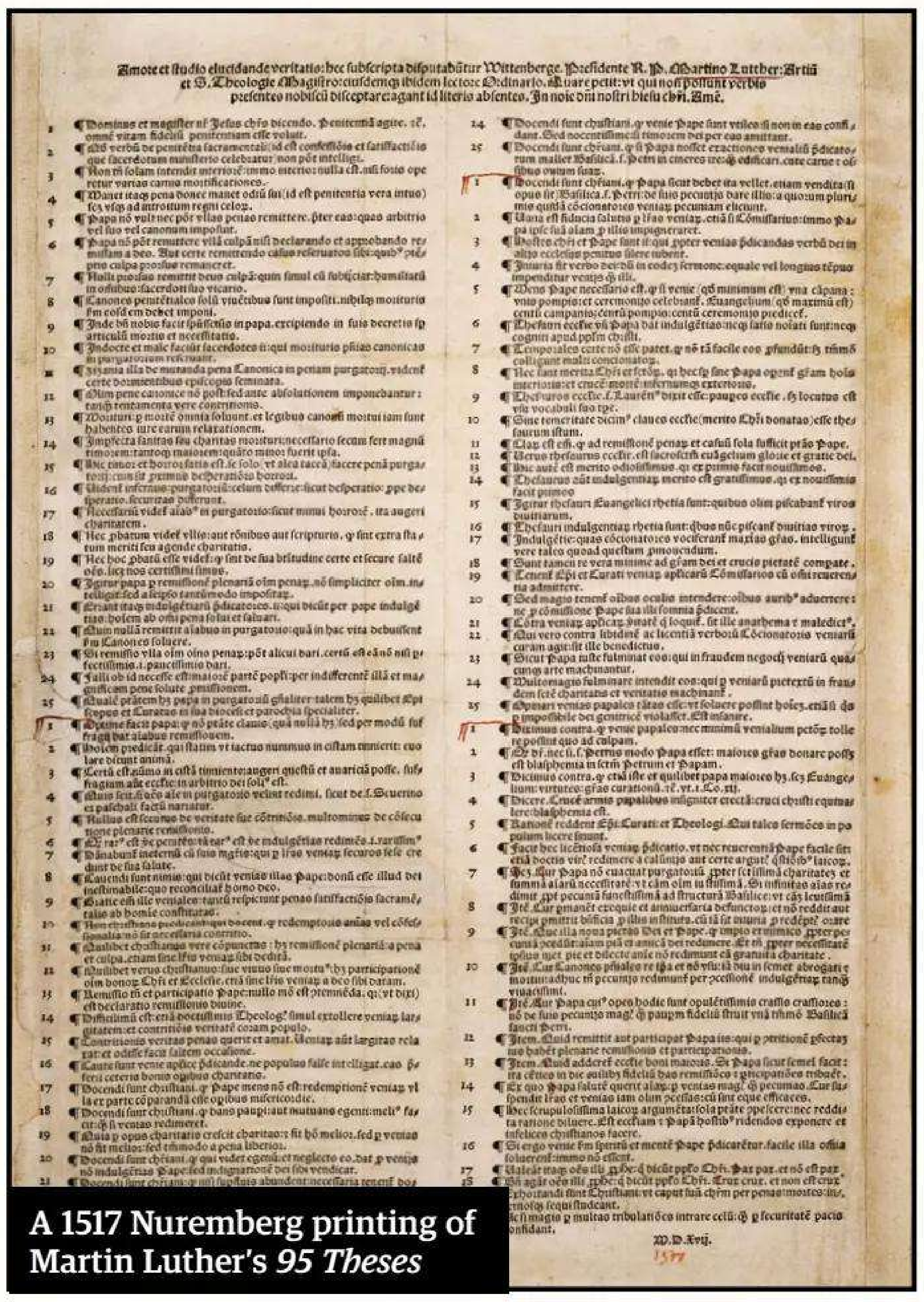
The principle cuius regio eius religio (the sovereign's religion is the religion of the state) was accepted in most countries. No nation could feel secure if its religious life was a free-for-all; if its citizens were able to believe whatever they wanted to believe.

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

We can see the essential issues dividing royal absolutism and religious freedom in the conflict taking place in Britain and Ireland at the same time as the later stages of the Thirty Years' War. The arguments for and against toleration lay at the heart of the English Civil War (1642-51). Charles I and Oliver Cromwell both took their political stand on the Bible. Charles clashed with parliament over issues in which the civil and religious rights of the people were intertwined. Oliver Cromwell, who emerged as the leader of parliament and the army, opposed the king on principles that were similarly impossible to disentangle. When, in January 1649, the king was brought to the scaffold to be executed for crimes against the people, he said in his address to the audience, "Liberty and freedom [of the people] consists not [in] having a share in government… a subject and a sovereign are clear different things". Four years later, Cromwell, now uncrowned head of state, arbitrarily dismissed parliament with these words: "perceiving the spirit of God so strong upon me, I would not consult flesh and blood". Both men were absolutists who sought their ultimate authority in scripture. Charles believed, as his predecessors believed, that the sovereign was God's appointed viceregent in church as well as state. In St Paul's Epistle to the Romans he found these words: "There is no power but of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (13, 1-2 King James Version). Cromwell found in that same epistle another source of authority: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (8, 9 King James Version). Both men claimed an authority that could not be challenged - one by virtue of his consecration; the other based upon the 'inner voice' of divine guidance. It was, indeed, central to the teaching of the New Testament that Christians would be directly guided by the Holy Spirit and that they would be able to discern people whose words and deeds showed them to be anti-Christian. Preachers and philosophers had argued for decades whether the word of God sanctioned Christians to oppose tyranny or whether they should patiently suffer injustice - if necessary by facing death - and they would continue to do so. In the short term the royalist cause prevailed - the monarchy was restored in 1660 but the seeds of parliamentary democracy had been sown by the constitutional conflict of the 17th century.

NEW RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Something else that emerged briefly in England in this period was a patchwork of miscellaneous religious groups. The parliamentary victory established the right of people to worship as they wished. Hitherto the king's subjects had



A 1517 Nuremberg printing of Martin Luther's *95 Theses*

> *"The parliamentary victory established the right of people to worship as they wished"*

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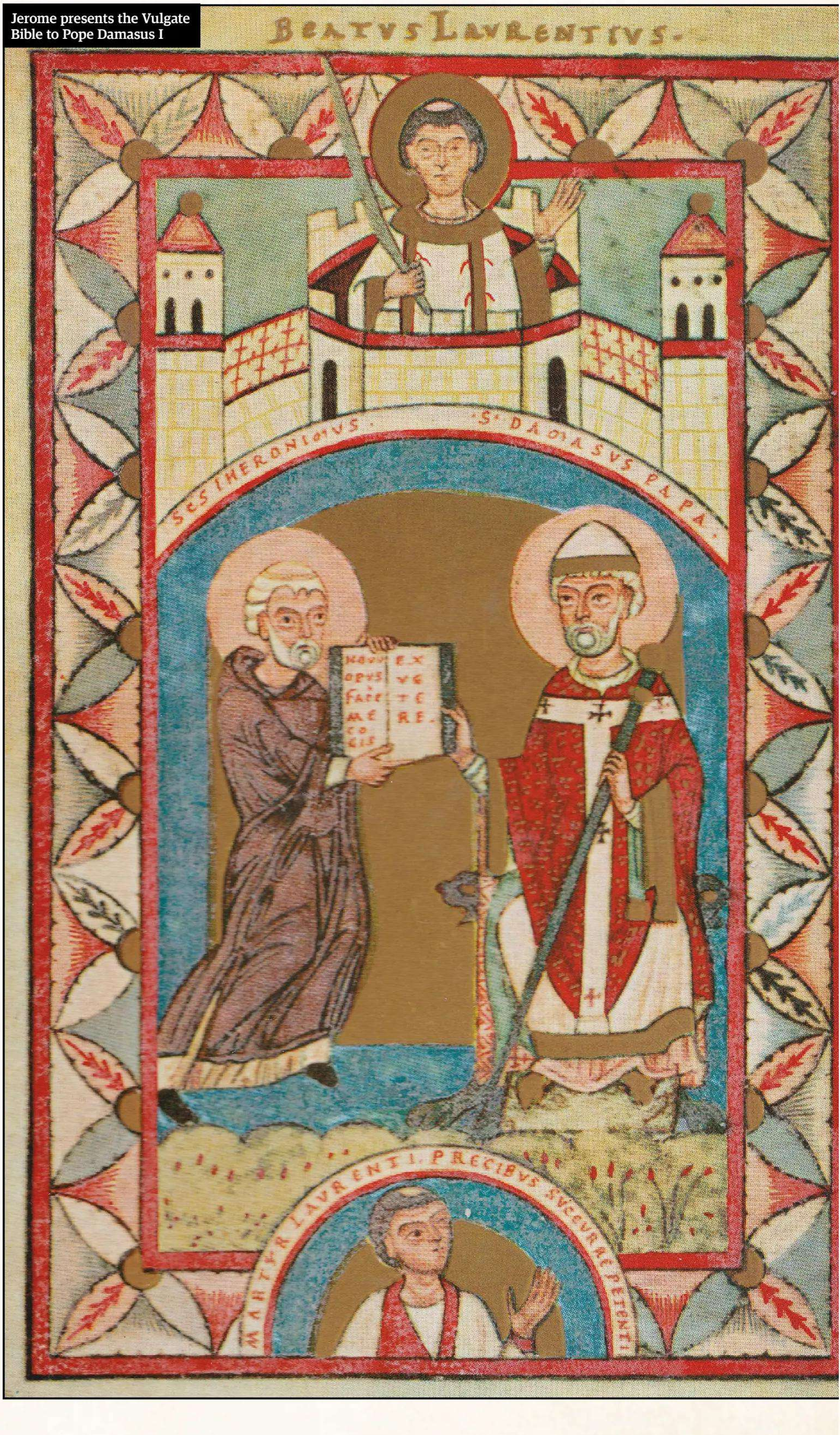
been obliged to worship according to the rites of the Church of England. Once this restriction was removed, people formed churches, each based on its own interpretation of the Bible. Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, Seekers and Muggletonians were just some of the non-conformist assemblies that sprang briefly to life once the rights of Englishmen to respond to the Bible message as they understood it was established. They were outlawed by the restoration of the monarchy and people dissenting from the official church suffered discrimination for more than a century.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the constant divisions among Bible-believing Christians would, long ago, have resulted in the consigning of this book to oblivion. The fact is that centuries of wars, persecutions and theological conflict have not destroyed the credibility of this unique book. On the contrary, throughout all the turmoil of human history worldwide, the Bible was and still is the most read book in the world.


BEATVS LAVRENTIVS
SCS IHERONIMVS
S DAMASVS PAPA
NOVU OPUS FACERE ME COGIS
EX VETERE
MARTYR LAVRENTI PRECIBVS SVCCVRRE PETENTI

Jerome presents the Vulgate Bible to Pope Damasus I

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Getty Images

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation successfully challenged the might of Rome

In 16th-century Europe, the world was changing. The Roman Catholic Church held an immense amount of political power and spiritual influence, but this power and influence was not without its detractors. With the Protestant Reformation, it faced its greatest challenge; the world would never be the same again. In the early 1500s, the power of the pope and the church over which he presided had become a source of annoyance for some rulers, who were looking to increase their own authority in relation to Rome. Their dissatisfaction and that of many of the Catholic congregation was only exacerbated by the opulence in which members of the clergy lived, with corruption widespread and barely hidden. Some Catholics wondered if their pope could really dedicate the time he should to their spiritual wellbeing too, since he seemed so occupied with politics, networking and sometimes even war. It was a spiritual powder keg, just waiting for someone to light the fuse. The Protestant Reformation did just that, resulting in the establishment of the Protestant faith and a schism in Western Christianity.

OVER-INDULGED

The Protestant Reformation began on 31 October 1517 in Wittenberg, Germany. when monk and academic, Martin Luther, nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of All Saints' Church. The theses attacked the corruption of the Catholic Church, chiefly the practice of selling "indulgences" to absolve sin. Despite what the Vatican might claim, wrote Luther, man could not buy his way into heaven; the only way to salvation was through belief in God, and the only religious authority was the Bible itself, not the pope in Rome.

Luther's protests again Catholic corruption was enormously controversial, but his was not a lone voice. Two years later, Ulrich Zwingli popularised the Reformation in Switzerland with sermons that echoed Luther's teachings. In 1541, exiled French Protestant John Calvin settled in Geneva with his followers, who followed his doctrine that stressed the power of God and the predetermined fate of humanity. Dutch Calvinism would spread throughout Scotland and Europe, where it enjoyed influence for centuries.

Though the Vatican condemned Luther's teachings, Pope Leo X did not immediately excommunicate him. However, as Luther's writings began to spread across Europe, other Protestant thinkers added to the growing pile of Reformation literature. Luther's books were burned on the orders of Vatican officials and, in 1521, he was summoned before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms – a parliamentary meeting held in the city of Worms. Here, Luther was ordered to recant his philosophy; when he refused to do so, he was excommunicated.

I.N.R.I.

However, excommunication could not stop the Protestant Reformation and the proliferation of printing presses in Germany meant that Luther's words and those of his supporters could not be silenced. Luther recognised the importance of brevity and published short, pointed works that became hugely popular. Thanks to the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder that illustrated his pamphlets, Luther's message could also reach the illiterate. They were small, light and easy to carry, so travellers such as merchants carried them from place to place, distributing them in each new location. Within two months of their initial publication, Luther's Theses were being read all over Europe. It was impossible for authorities to police every printing press, or every traveller who might be carrying pamphlets, but nor could they silence the evangelical preachers who shared Luther's messages. Figures like Basel's Konrad Kürsner and Strasbourg's Matthäus Zell ensured that Protestantism was carried beyond Germany, emphasising that the corruptions and indulgences of Catholicism were not to be found in the Bible.

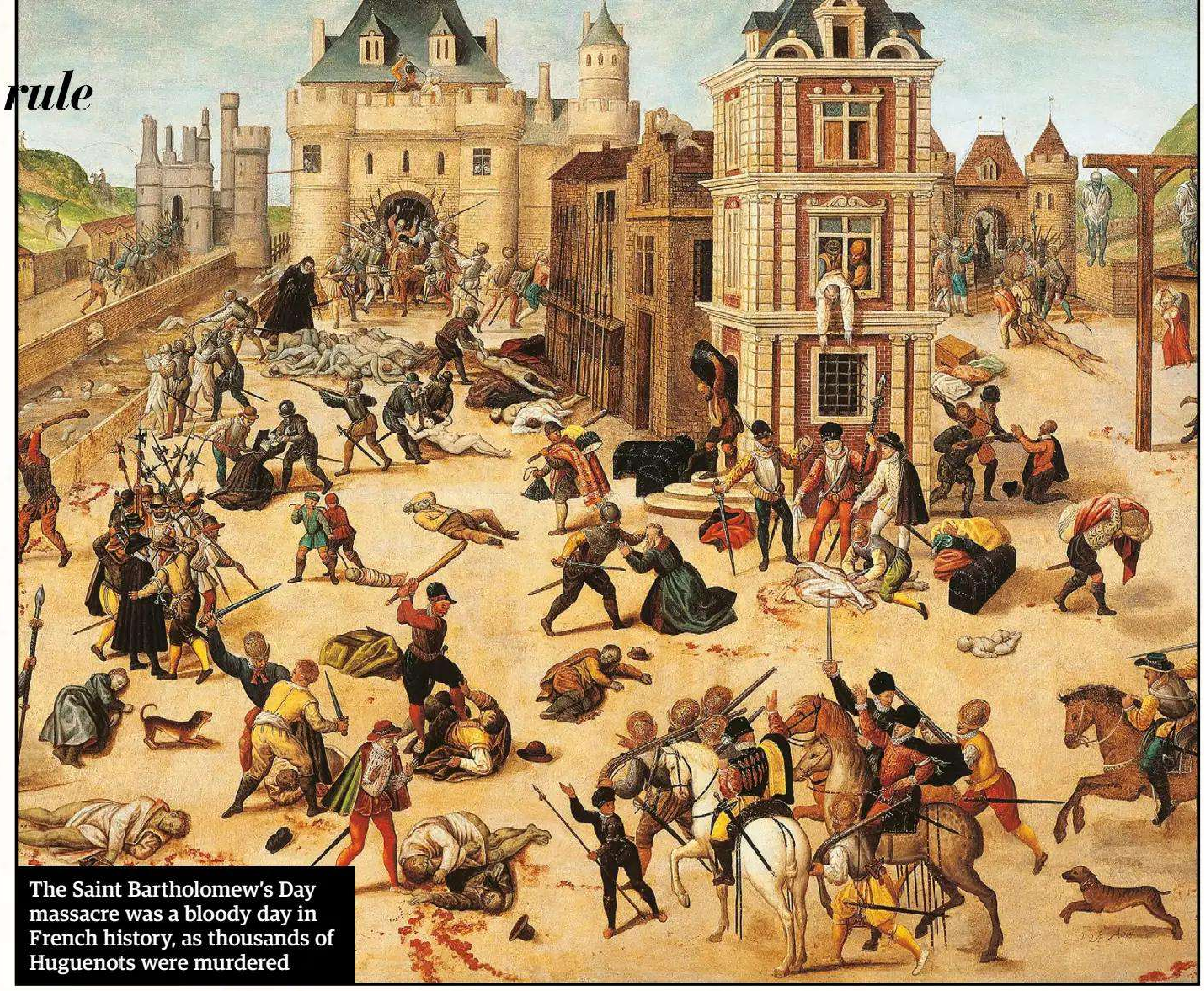
In some cities, violent anti-Catholic protests broke out, as dissatisfaction with the once all-powerful church spread. The reforms that Protestantism called for could not be achieved within the existing structure of Catholicism and, as the Reformation began to take hold, monasteries and convents were dissolved, powerful Catholic officials were expelled from positions of civic influence and the very face of Europe began to change. The property of dissolved Catholic institutions was repurposed to provide poor relief while, in keeping with Luther's belief that education was key to being able to serve God, libraries and schools were opened, financed by this repurposed wealth.

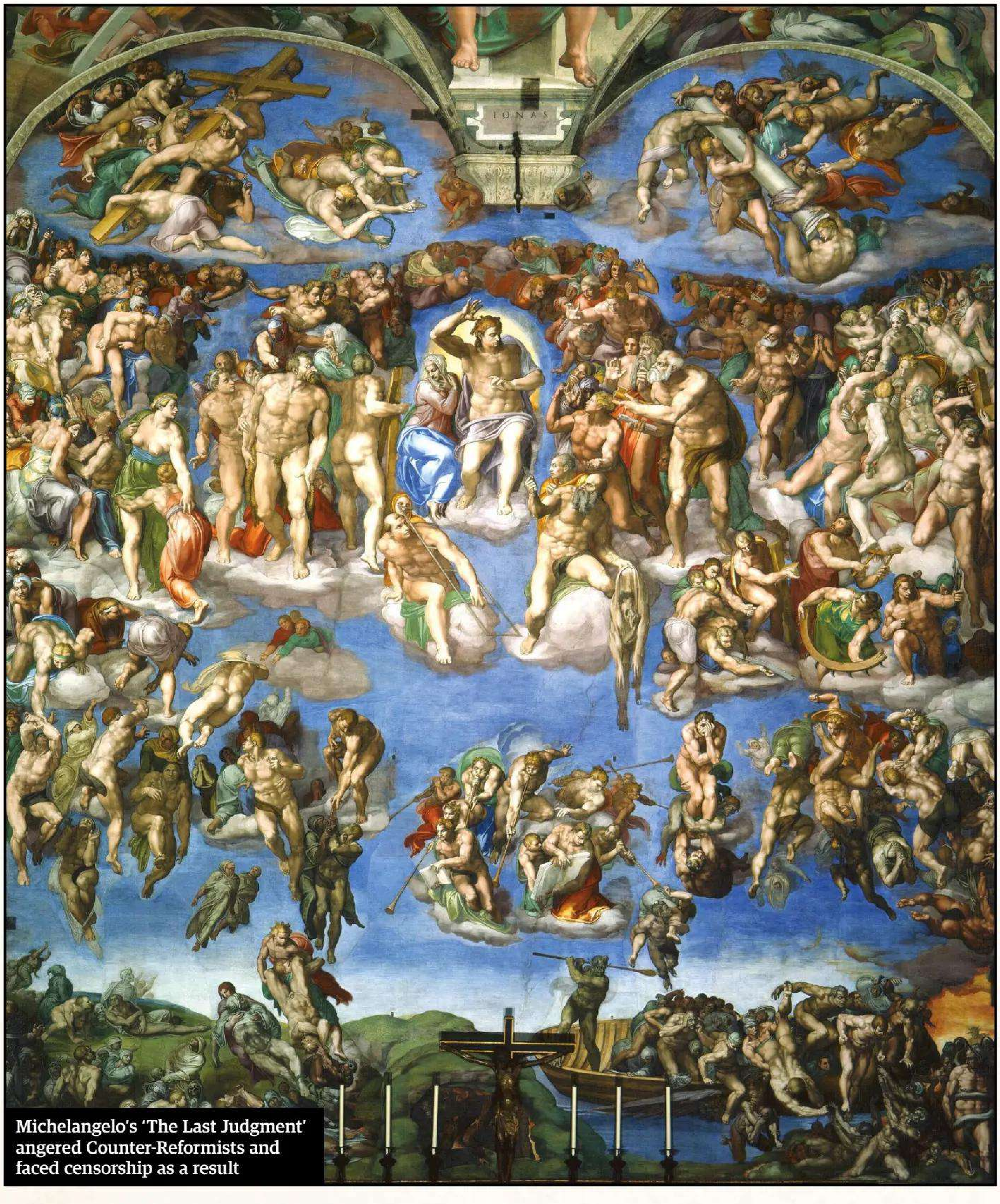
HOLY WAR

The Reformation brought with it violence and, inevitably, war. The efforts of the Counter-Reformation to fight back against the changes exploded into the wars of religion, as powers allied to Rome and those who wished to take advantage of the Vatican's tottering power fought for the upper hand. Though religion might have been the foundation of these wars, territory, wealth and dynasty came into play and with conflicts such as the Thirty Years' War, the religious and territorial boundaries of Europe were changed once more.

In France, meanwhile, the French Wars of Religion between the Catholics and Protestant Huguenots raged between 1562 and 1598. In this series of eight civil wars, millions of people died, including the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, which saw thousands of Huguenots killed as a wave of mob violence swept through France. As a result of the conflicts the French monarchy found its power badly destabilised, as the predominantly Catholic France found itself split from within.

When King Henry VIII read Luther's writings, he was so furious that he penned a defence of


The Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre was a bloody day in French history, as thousands of Huguenots were murdered



Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgment' angered Counter-Reformists and faced censorship as a result

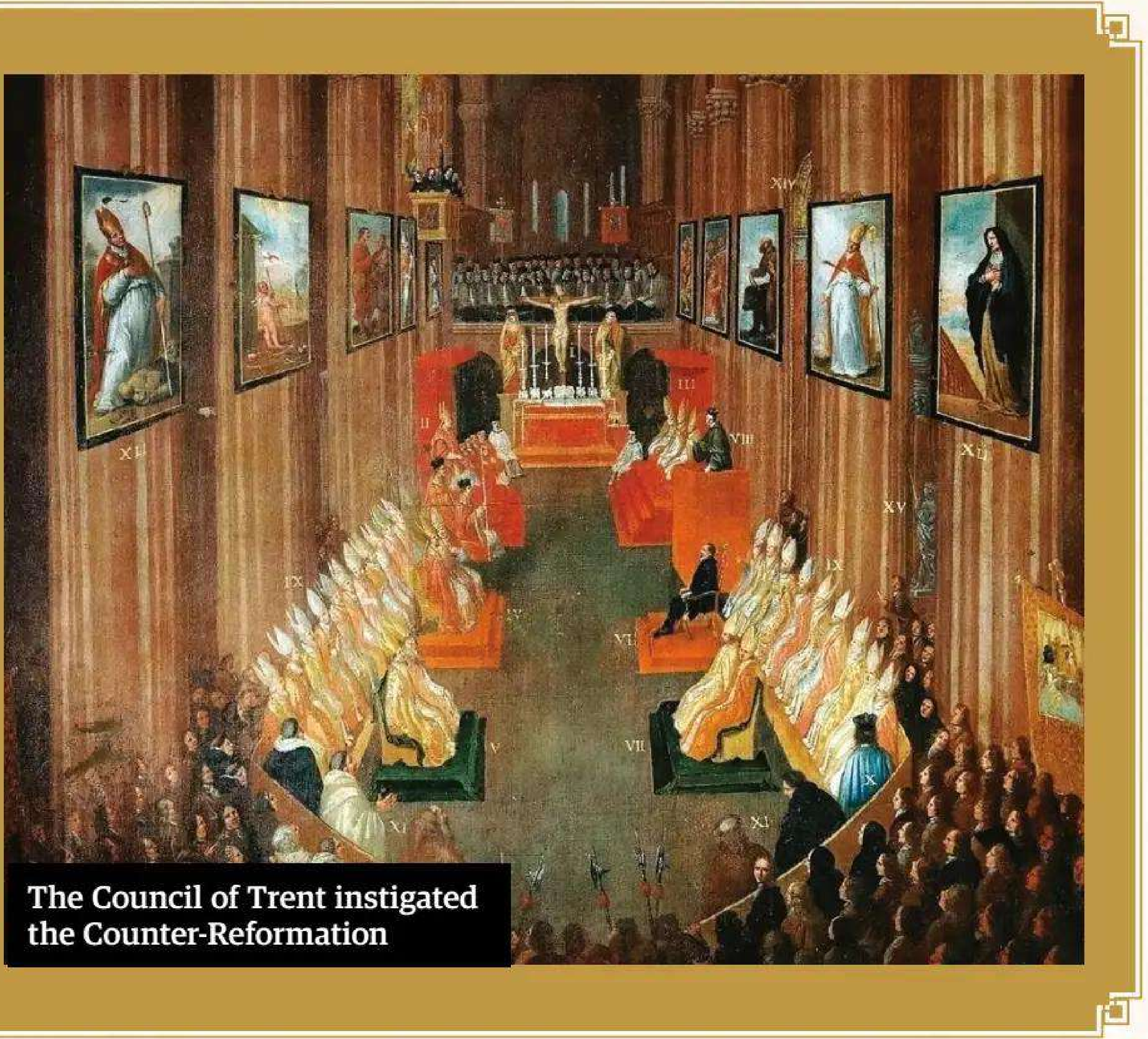
The Counter-Reformation

When the Reformation came, it was met with a fierce opposition

In 1545, the Catholic Church held the Council of Trent, the first of a series of meetings that would discuss the issues raised by Martin Luther. This marked the beginning of the Counter-Reformation, as the church sought to reform internally and re-establish itself as Europe's spiritual authority. Under the stewardship of Pope Paul II, the Council made significant changes, addressing allegations of corruption and other malpractice, while rejecting any compromise with Protestantism. The Counter-Reformation attempted to re-establish the concept of one ultimate spiritual truth, arguing that the Bible might be misinterpreted without a central authority such as the Roman Catholic Church to offer guidance. The church also recognised the importance of art when it came to spreading its message and today, many works exist that are powerful lasting monuments to the Council's discussions.

Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgment', which can be seen in the Sistine Chapel, however, angered the Counter-Reformers by daring to show nudity, in direct contravention of the Council's ruling that no such imagery may be displayed in a place of worship. The work was censored for centuries.

The efforts of the Catholic Church to re-establish its authority proved successful in some countries, though not all. In a changing world, there was simply no going back.


The Council of Trent instigated the Counter-Reformation

Catholicism, which Pope Leo X rewarded with the title of Fidel Defensor (Defender of the Faith). Henry's Catholic faith, however, was not as strong as his wish for a male heir and when a son wasn't forthcoming from his marriage to 40-year-old Catherine of Aragon, he sought an annulment. In 1527, Pope Clement VII refused the request, mindful that Rome was in the hands of Catherine's nephew, Charles V. With the official request denied, Henry decided to smash the Roman Catholic Church's authority in England. He changed the status quo to ensure that canon laws could only be passed with royal assent, and removed the right to appeal legal cases outside England, thus ensuring that the Vatican could have no influence over legal issues. Then in November 1534, he passed the Act of Supremacy.

ACT OF GOD

This Act formally abolished papal authority in England and named Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England. For the existing clergy, there were two options: accept the new normal, or face the consequences. In the wake of the Act, the King ordered the dissolution of the monasteries and the closure of institutions, and buildings that embodied Catholic authority. Protestant reformers smashed statues, defaced artworks and in some cases, Catholic clergy were executed. The burning of heretics continued but despite having named Protestant Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry's first announcements as head of the Church of England maintained traditional Catholic practices and doctrines, adding just a garnish of Lutheranism.

The Protestant Reformation reshaped the religious identity of the continent and ended the unchallenged influence of the Vatican forever, thousands of lives were lost as a result of the war and conflict that followed. The Reformation was also responsible for the formation of numerous branches of Christianity, all of them finding their roots in Protestantism, and in doing so it offered a freedom of religion that had previously been unthinkable. Yet not all of its legacy can be found in war and religion. The Protestant Reformation also encouraged a new cultural landscape, effectively ending the Middle Ages and ushering in the Early Modern period, encouraging education and bringing with it new frontiers for art, literature and philosophy. The impact of Luther's Theses continue to be felt to this very day.

> *"The Protestant Reformation came at an enormous and violent cost to the people of Europe"*

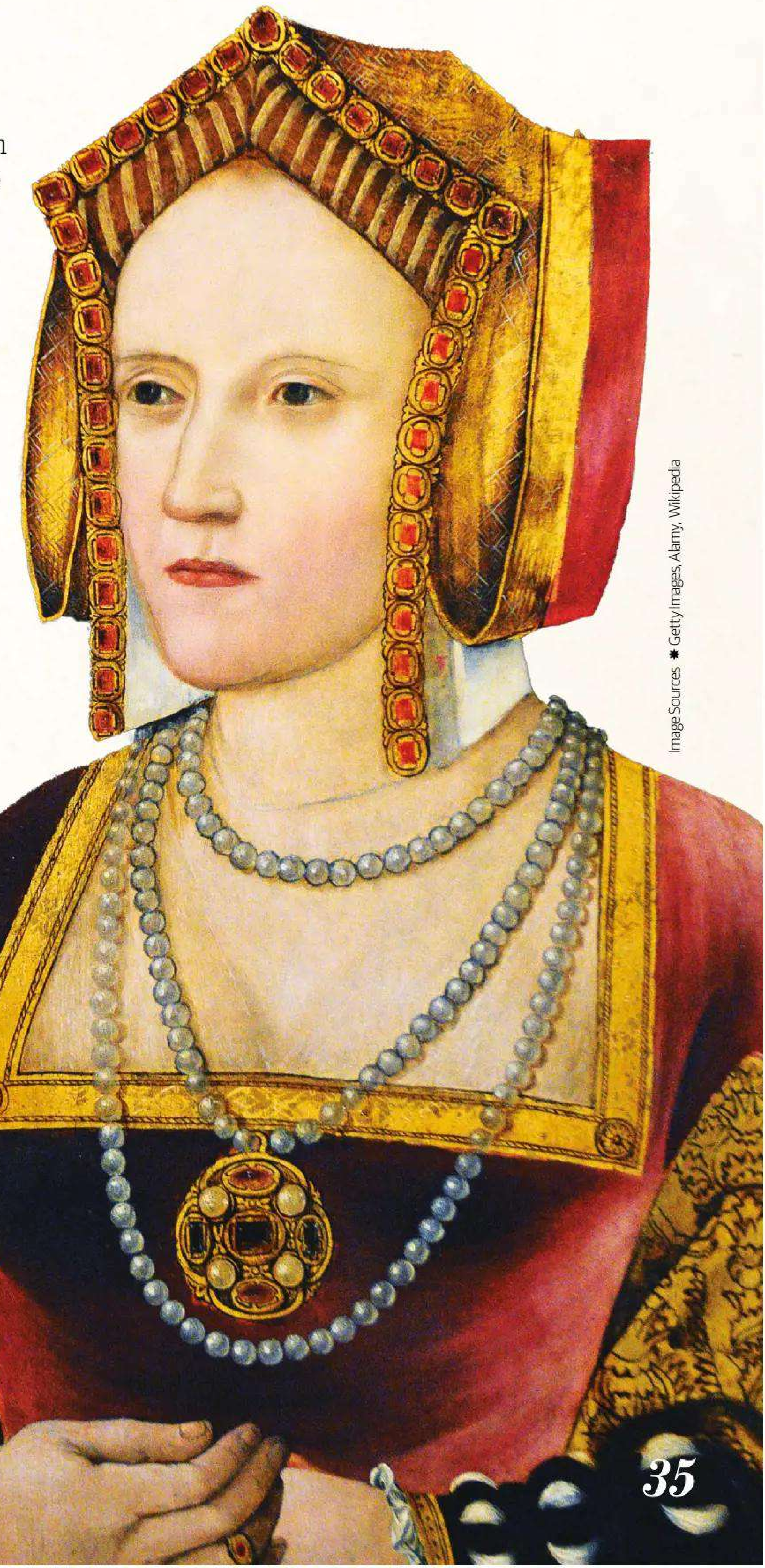


Image Sources ✱ Getty Images, Alamy, Wikipedia

ENGLAND'S REFORMATION

How doctrinal arguments in the fractious English church led to the creation of separatist groups with their own unique religious ideas

At the Battle of Bosworth Field on 22 August 1485 Henry Tudor, a Welsh upstart distantly related to the Lancastrian king Henry VI, defeated and killed the Yorkist occupant of the throne. No one had any reason to believe this was the last clash in what a later age called The Wars of the Roses. Indeed, the new king, Henry VII, spent much of his reign fighting off challenges from rival claimants. For the next century, his son and grandchildren would be haunted by the spectre of a premature end to their dynasty. There was a fundamental insecurity felt, at the very least, by those who had a stake in the political life of the nation. But there were other eerie forces at work.

> The English Reformation set the stage for a new age of religious intolerance that eventually fuelled the Salem trials

A CHANGING WORLD

The strongest of those was the communications revolution. Today we are very aware of the social changes wrought by computer technology. Around the time of the Battle of Bosworth the invention of the movable-type printing press made possible the mass production of books, which hitherto had been laboriously hand-written. There were at least five major aspects of the revolution to which this led: the rapid spread of information and ideas, the growing demand for education, the development of vernacular languages (before this almost all books had been in Latin, the lingua franca of scholars), the closing of the gap between clergy and laity, and the focus of religious life on the written word rather than the painted, carved or sculpted image.

Traditional religious observance for most lay people in the 15th century centred on the sacraments and particularly attendance at mass. This re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice was performed by the officiating priest on behalf of the congregation, whose involvement was largely passive. Since the liturgy was in Latin it is unlikely that most parishioners actually understood the subtleties of Christian doctrine. They very rarely heard sermons and most clergy were, in fact, ill-equipped to deliver them. This is not to say that Englishmen as a whole were indifferent to spiritual commitment. They attended confession. They belonged to guilds responsible for the maintenance of altars and chapels. They paid for masses to be said for the repose of their souls and those of their loved ones. If their imagination was stirred it was largely by material objects. Worshippers venerated crucifixes as well as statues of the Virgin Mary and other saints. They made pilgrimages to shrines where holy relics were housed, such as saints' bones, fragments of the true cross and other personal

Image Source • José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro

The Marprelate Tracts

In the aftermath of the Spanish Armada's defeat, the religious debate turned nasty

In the autumn of 1588 the ragged remnants of Philip II's Spanish invasion fleet were making their way home from their English defeat, via the waters off Scotland and Ireland.

The English were ecstatic at this victory over the forces of militant Roman Catholicism. Cashing in on this euphoria was an anonymous pamphlet which now appeared on the bookstalls – *An Epistle to the Terrible Priests of the Convocation House*. The anonymous author wrote under the name 'Martin Marprelate' and he laid into the bishops with biting satire. The publishers worked from a press in Essex, their objective to undermine the leaders of the religious establishment, 'that swinish rabble of petty antichrists, petty popes, proud prelates, intolerable withstanders of reformation and enemies of the gospel'. The government tried to sniff out the ringleaders and employed popular playwrights to respond in kind. But Marprelate's co-conspirators moved to the Midlands and transported the press from place to place. As for the ripostes, they only kept the controversy in the public eye. *Seven Marprelate Tracts* were published over the next few months before the press was shut down and not until 1593 were three of the main offenders (not including Marprelate) hanged.

The Marprelate Tracts widened the breach between the official English Church and the Presbyterian 'church within a church'. Many Puritan leaders distanced themselves from the pamphleteers but the stigma of sedition stuck and many radicals felt their only course was to leave the country.

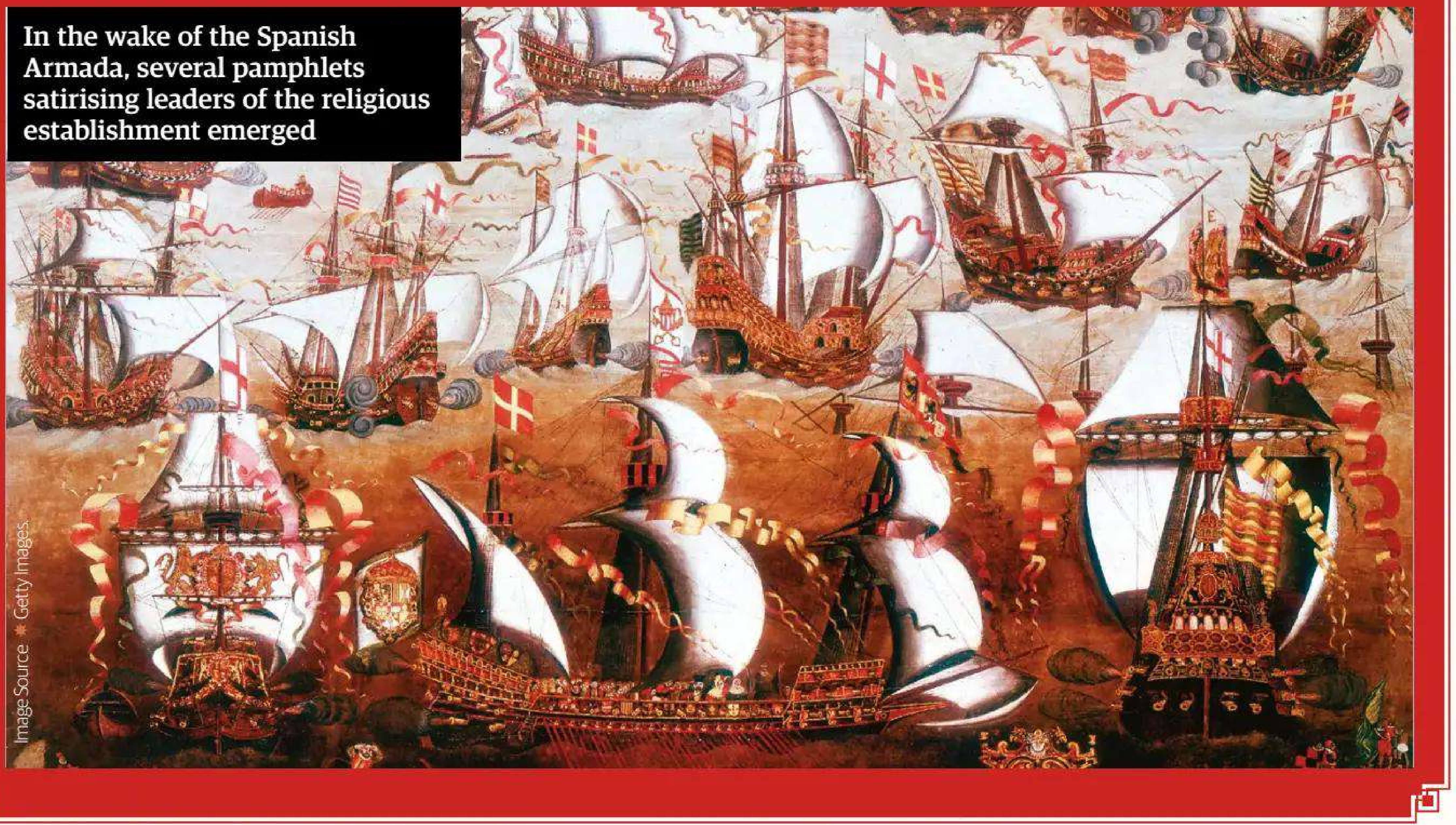
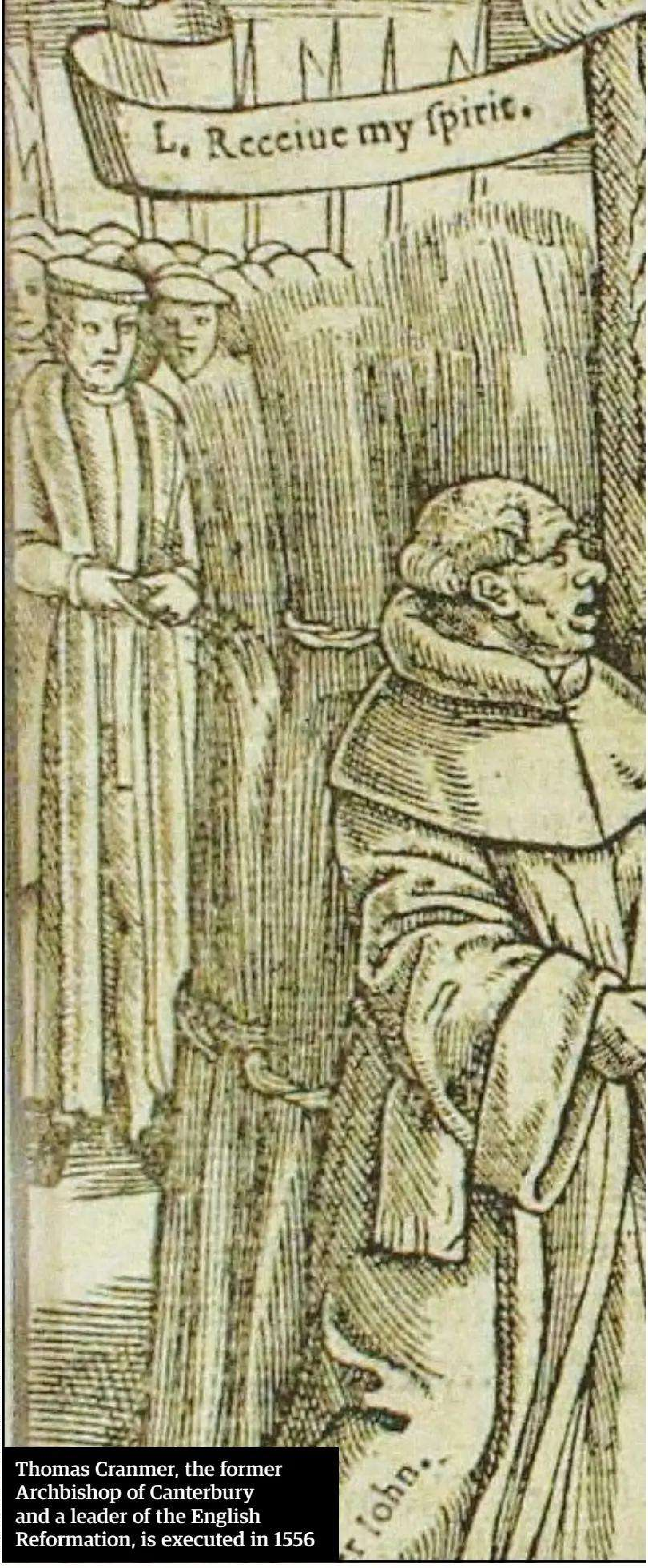

In the wake of the Spanish Armada, several pamphlets satirising leaders of the religious establishment emerged

Image Source ✱ Getty Images



Thomas Cranmer, the former Archbishop of Canterbury and a leader of the English Reformation, is executed in 1556

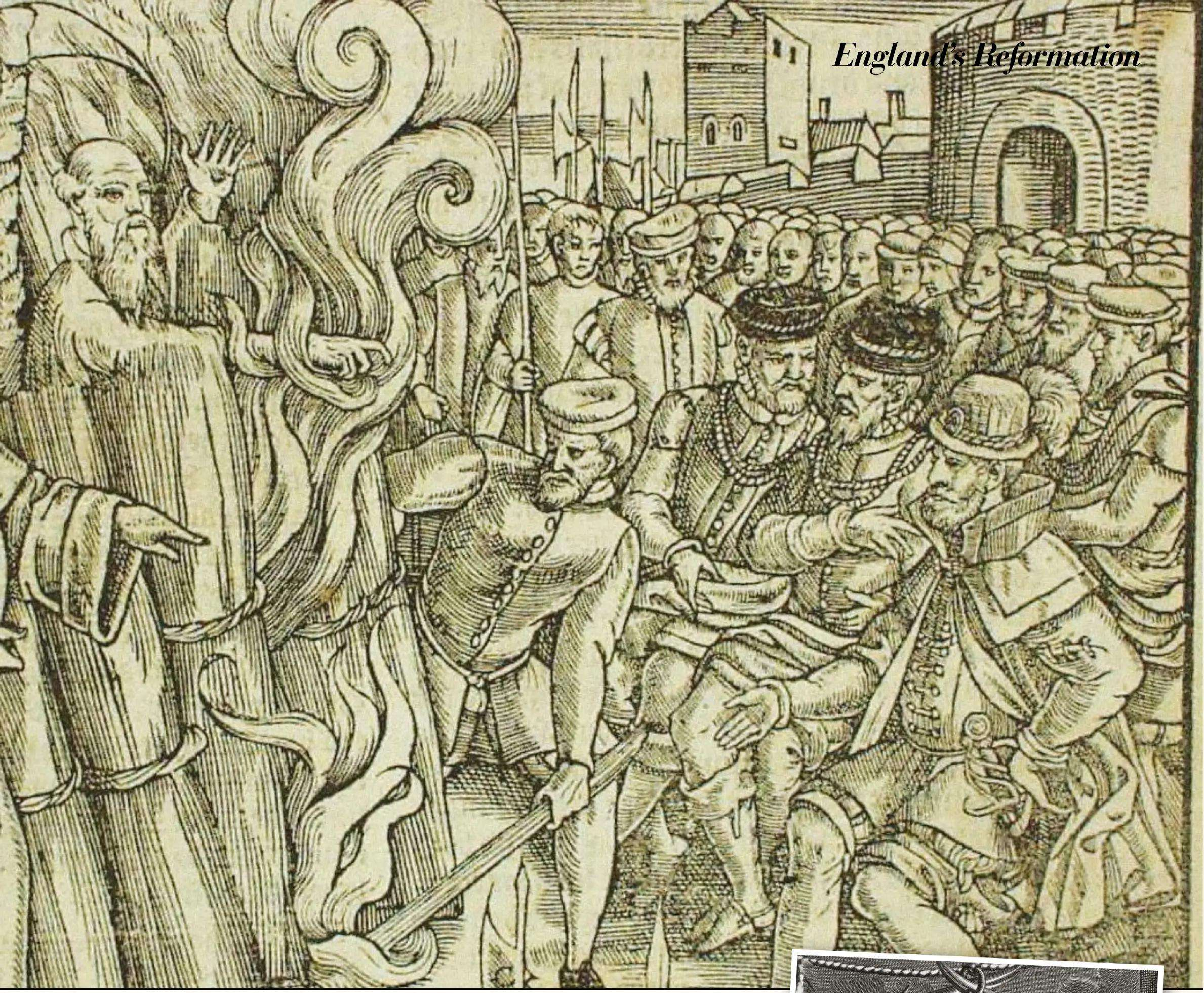
Image Source ✱ John Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

items related to Christ or other holy figures. They sought the intercessions of saints when they were sick or in any other adversity. But probably the objects that impacted most strongly and frequently on worshippers were the painted images with which church walls were crowded. Biblical scenes were mingled with illustrations of incidents from Church history and others whose only origin was popular legend. However, the most compelling image in most buildings and the one displayed most prominently was the 'doom', a representation of Christ the Judge, receiving some souls into heaven and dispatching others to Hell. It would be no exaggeration to say that it was concern for their ultimate destiny that kept most people obedient to the Church. Even so, there is clear evidence of anticlericalism and heresy. Scepticism and downright hostility extended from alehouse mockery to popular literature such as *Ship of Fools* by the German Sebastian Brant, a best-selling satire translated into English in 1509. Even many bishops were angry with the poor quality of the clergy, many of whom were ill-educated, incompetent and, in some cases, immoral. But none of this struck at the doctrinal roots of the Church.

THE LOLLARDS

The people who did that were the Lollards. The name, of Dutch origin, was used to describe people of varied unorthodox views who 'mumbled' or 'lolled' their opinions. They gathered in small, scattered communities, mostly in southern England. They had two major beliefs in common. One was a rejection of transubstantiation – the philosophical basis of the mass which claimed that, by the act of consecration, a priest actually changed bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ. By claiming that the sacramental elements were merely symbolising Christ's presence Lollards struck at the 'magical' power that separated priests from ordinary mortals. The other was their commitment to the English Bible. Back in 1408, English Church leaders had banned unauthorised translation of the Latin Vulgate into English because they feared the spread of the 'heresies' of John Wycliffe, a 14th-century Oxford don who had challenged aspects of Catholic teaching, claiming biblical support, and had set in hand an English version of the Vulgate. Over the next century, members of his sect had completed his work and these Lollards, in their secret meetings, studied the Bible together, convinced its authority outranked that of the Pope. The Lollards were a small minority who, for the most part, kept a low profile. From time to time, the bishops launched campaigns against them, but without much effect.

Most Lollards came from the humbler strands of society – artisans and semi-educated tradespeople. By the early-16th century their unconventional thinking was running parallel with the Renaissance

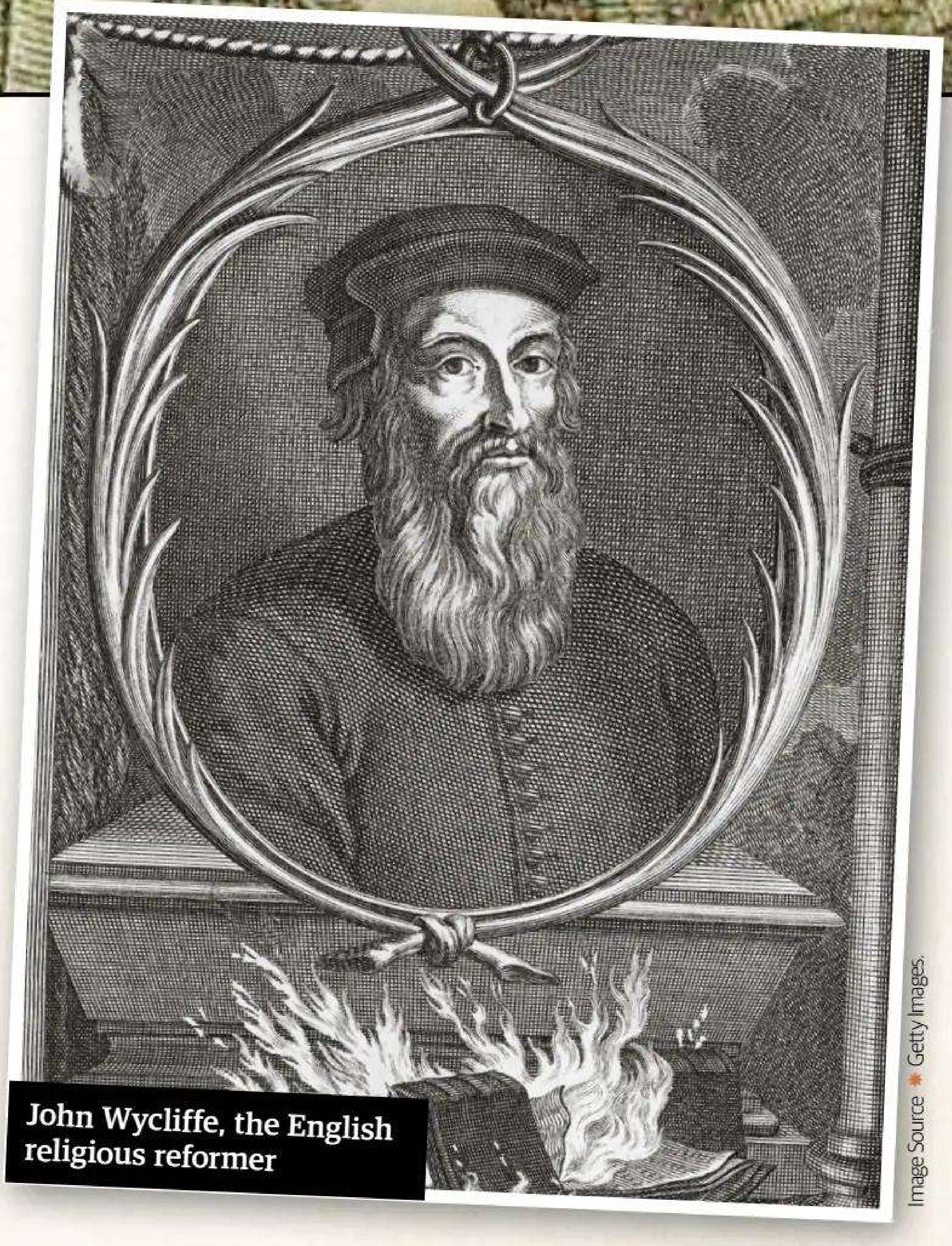


humanism embraced by many of the intellectual elite. Basic to the new approach was a reappraisal of classical authors and a challenge to 'scholasticism', the educational methodology of the medieval Church. In terms of the wider religious life of Europe, there were two developments causing fundamental rethinking. One was a revived interest in ancient Greek. This sent scholars back to early New Testament documents (some recently discovered) and suggested that the Latin Vulgate, basic to all Church teaching, was capable of being re-interpreted. The other development, as the term 'humanism' suggests, was a new emphasis on humanity – life in the here and now, as opposed to life in the hereafter.

LUTHER'S THESES

All these subtle changes were straining the fabric of medieval religious life. Therefore, when in 1516, the German monk Martin Luther made a frontal assault on basic Catholic doctrine, parts of the structure collapsed with remarkable rapidity. Luther suggested the Greek biblical word rendered by the Vulgate as 'do penance', should really be translated as 'repent'. This and other challenges gave power to the individual to determine their relationship with God and undercut the power of a mediating priesthood. Ten years later an Oxford scholar, William Tyndale, defied the authorities by publishing an English New Testament. This rapidly became the most explosive book in the nation's history – partly because of its Lutheran glosses. Though banned, it was widely read, and though some people were burned at the stake for possessing it, nothing stopped its spread or its influence. The English Reformation was well and truly under way.

Nothing would have stopped it, but political action by King Henry VIII strengthened its impact. At the same time that Tyndale's book



John Wycliffe, the English religious reformer

Image Source • Getty Images

> "Unfortunately, the new monarch, Elizabeth I, did not share their vision. She inherited a kingdom divided on matters of religion"

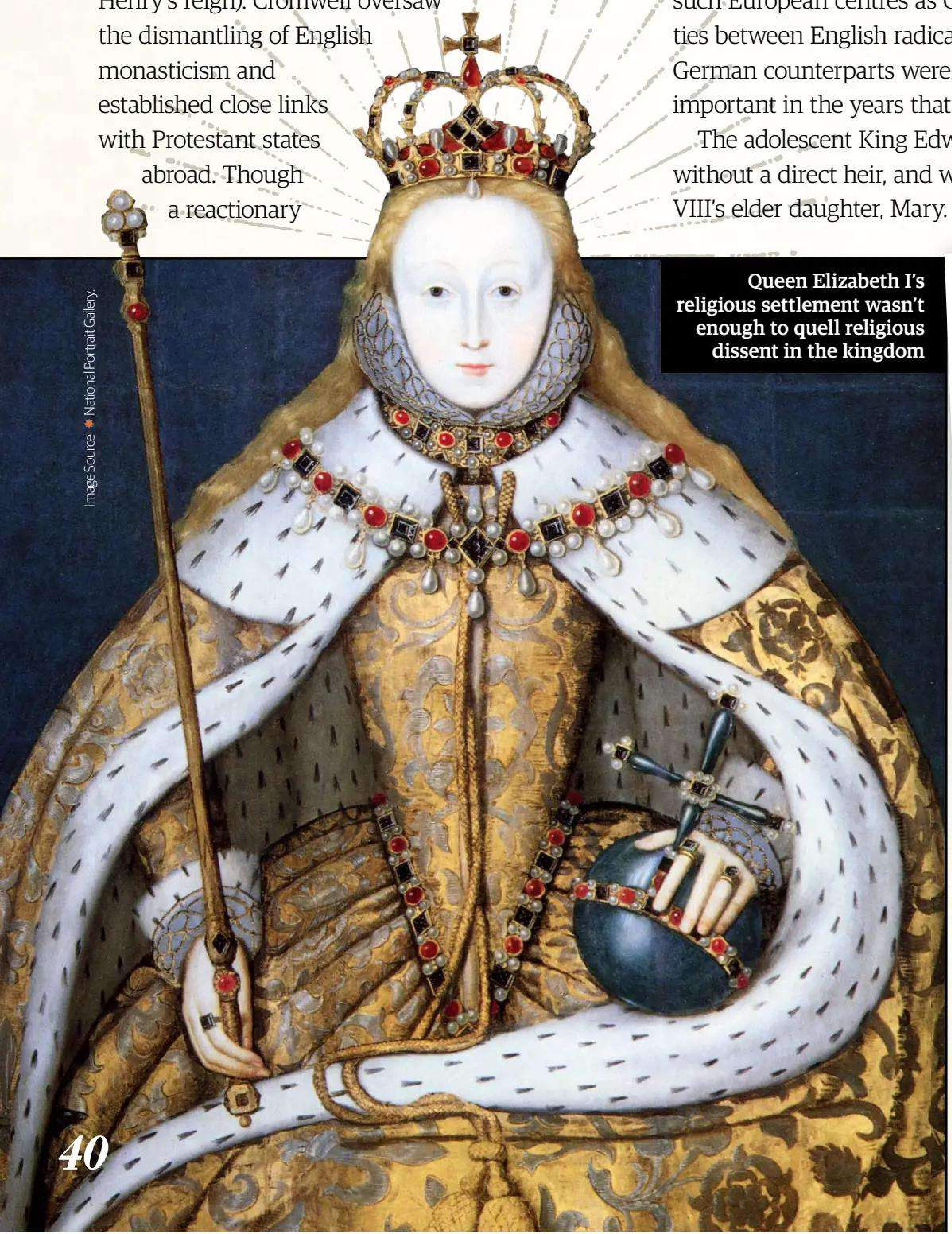
began circulating, Henry fell out with the Pope. Determined to end his marriage to his queen, he looked to Rome for an annulment. But, for various reasons, the Pope was unable to gratify his request. After years of mounting acrimony, Parliament passed an Act of Supremacy in 1534. This established the King and not the Pope as the spiritual head of the English Church, which in effect became a state department. To strengthen his position and minimise the threat of Catholic backlash, Henry had to win the support of radicals and employ some of them in the government's propaganda campaign of preaching and writing. His principal agent in achieving this and the man put in charge of religious policy was Thomas Cromwell, someone who, as historians are now recognising, was a convinced Protestant (though the word would not be used in England during Henry's reign). Cromwell oversaw the dismantling of English monasticism and established close links with Protestant states abroad. Though a reactionary court coup had Cromwell removed from power and executed in 1540, he had done enough to ensure that supporters of the 'New Learning' were dominant in English political life and assumed control when the nine-year-old Edward VI became England's short-lived king in 1547.

HENRY'S CHILDREN

The brief years of Edward's reign (1547-1553) were those in which the Reformation was irrevocably established. The Church, led by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, abolished the mass and other Latin rites in favour of an English Prayer Book (1549, revised 1552). Use of the new book was made mandatory by the Act of Uniformity (1549). Foreign scholars were brought over from the continent to teach in the universities and to undergird the doctrine of the English Church with theology developed in such European centres as Geneva and Zurich. The ties between English radicals and their Swiss and German counterparts were to prove extremely important in the years that followed.

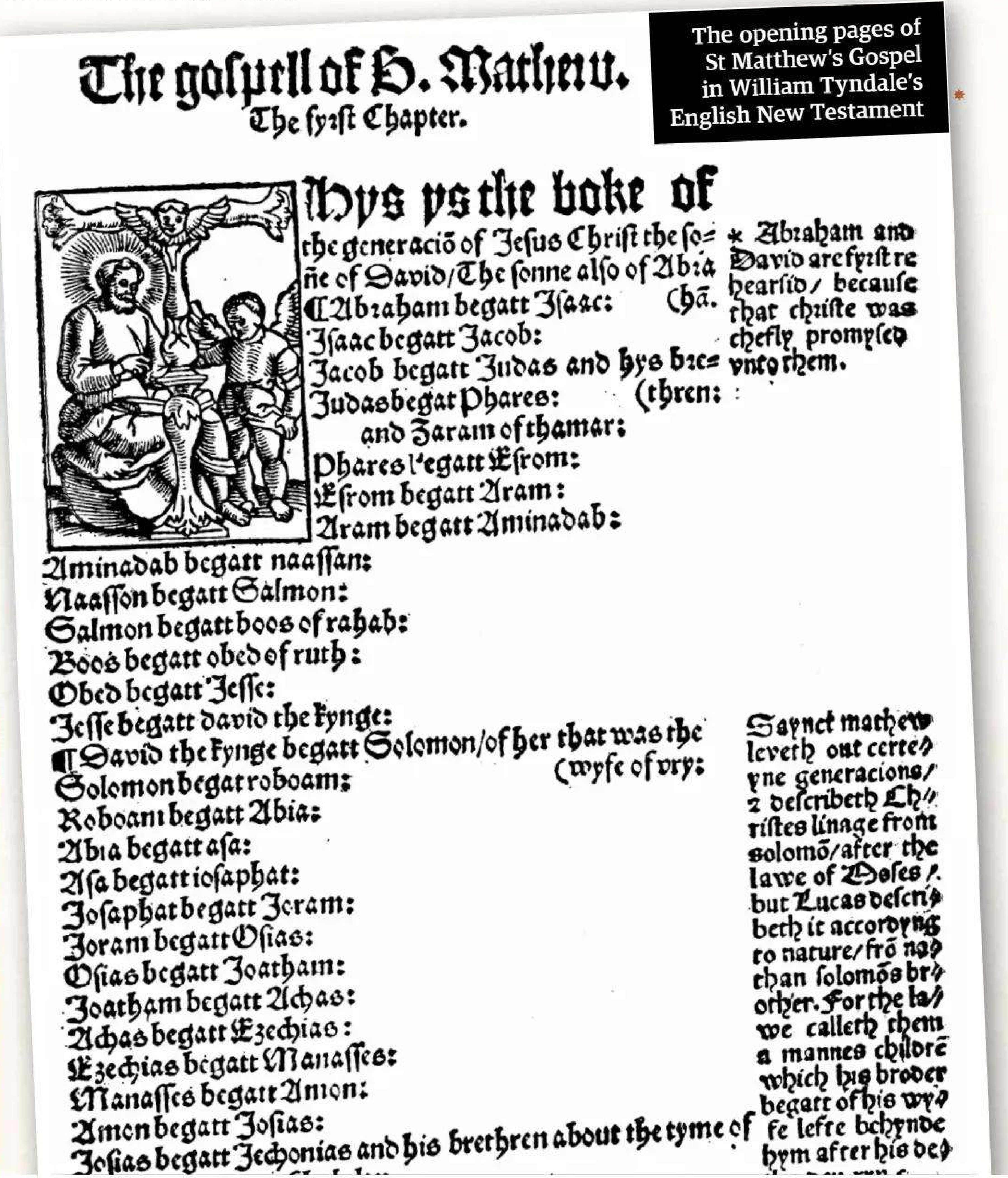
The adolescent King Edward died unmarried and without a direct heir, and was replaced by Henry VIII's elder daughter, Mary. She inadvertently sealed the Reformation by attempting to eradicate it. Determined to reinstate papal authority and Catholic doctrine, she had the religious statutes of her father and half-brother annulled, re-established the mass, purged the Church of clergy who refused to comply and sent to the stake about 300 Protestant 'heretics'. Although most of her subjects accepted this reversal, a substantial minority did not. Most of these dissidents nursed their real beliefs in secret, but several hundred fled across the Channel and found havens in Geneva, Zurich and other reform centres. This was absolutely crucial to the future of the English Church. In their foreign refuges they adopted the teachings of Protestant leaders such as Jean Calvin in Geneva and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich. When Mary also died childless after a short reign in 1558, the exiles returned, fired up by what they had seen in the well-established Protestant states abroad and encouraged by the blood of the martyrs to set up in their own country the utopian ideal of a perfect Christian commonwealth.

Unfortunately, the new monarch, Elizabeth I, did not share their vision. She inherited a kingdom divided on matters of religion. At one extreme were Catholics who longed for another change of regime which would restore the old faith. Some were recusants – people who refused to attend Protestant services. They welcomed Catholic priests, smuggled into the country from France and the Low Countries, who celebrated mass for them in secret gatherings. Some plotted the overthrow of the regime, particularly after Pius V issued a papal bull in 1570 which absolved all Catholics from



Queen Elizabeth I's religious settlement wasn't enough to quell religious dissent in the kingdom

Image Source * National Portrait Gallery



The opening pages of St Matthew's Gospel in William Tyndale's English New Testament

The goſpell of S. Mathew.
The fyrſt Chapter.

Thys ys the boke of
the generaciō of Jeſus Chriſt the ſo=
n̄e of David/The ſonne alſo of Abra
¶ Abraham begatt Iſaac: (hā.
Iſaac begatt Jacob:
Jacob begatt Judas and hys bre=
Judas begat Phares: (thren:
and Zaram of thamar:
Phares begatt Eſrom:
Eſrom begatt Aram:
Aram begatt Aminadab:
Aminadab begatt naaſſan:
Naaſſon begatt Salmon:
Salmon begatt boos of rahab:
Boos begatt obed of ruth:
Obed begatt Jeſſe:
Jeſſe begatt david the kynge:
¶ David the kynge begatt Solomon/of her that was the
(wyfe of vry:
Solomon begat roboam:
Roboam begatt Abia:
Abia begatt aſa:
Aſa begatt ioſaphat:
Joſaphat begatt Joram:
Joram begatt Oſias:
Oſias begatt Joatham:
Joatham begatt Achas:
Achas begatt Ezechias:
Ezechias begatt Manaſſes:
Manaſſes begatt Amon:
Amon begatt Joſias:
Joſias begatt Jechonias and his brethren about the tyme of

* Abraham and
David are fyrſt re
hearſid/ becauſe
that chriſte was
chefly promyſed
vnto them.

Saynct mathew
leveth out certe/
yne generacions/
& deſcribeth Ch/
riſtes linage from
solomō/after the
lawe of Moſes/.
but Lucas deſcri/
beth it accordyng
to nature/frō nað
than ſolomōs br/
other. For the la/
we calleth them
a mannes childrē
which his broder
begatt of his wy/
fe lefte behynde
hym after his de/

allegiance to the queen. At the other end of the spectrum were the Puritans. They were Protestants holding various doctrinal positions but who looked mainly to an extreme form of Calvinism for their image of the true Church. Several of the returning exiles obtained positions in the restored Protestant Church. They were determined to work within that Church, completing, as they saw it, the purifying work of Reformation.

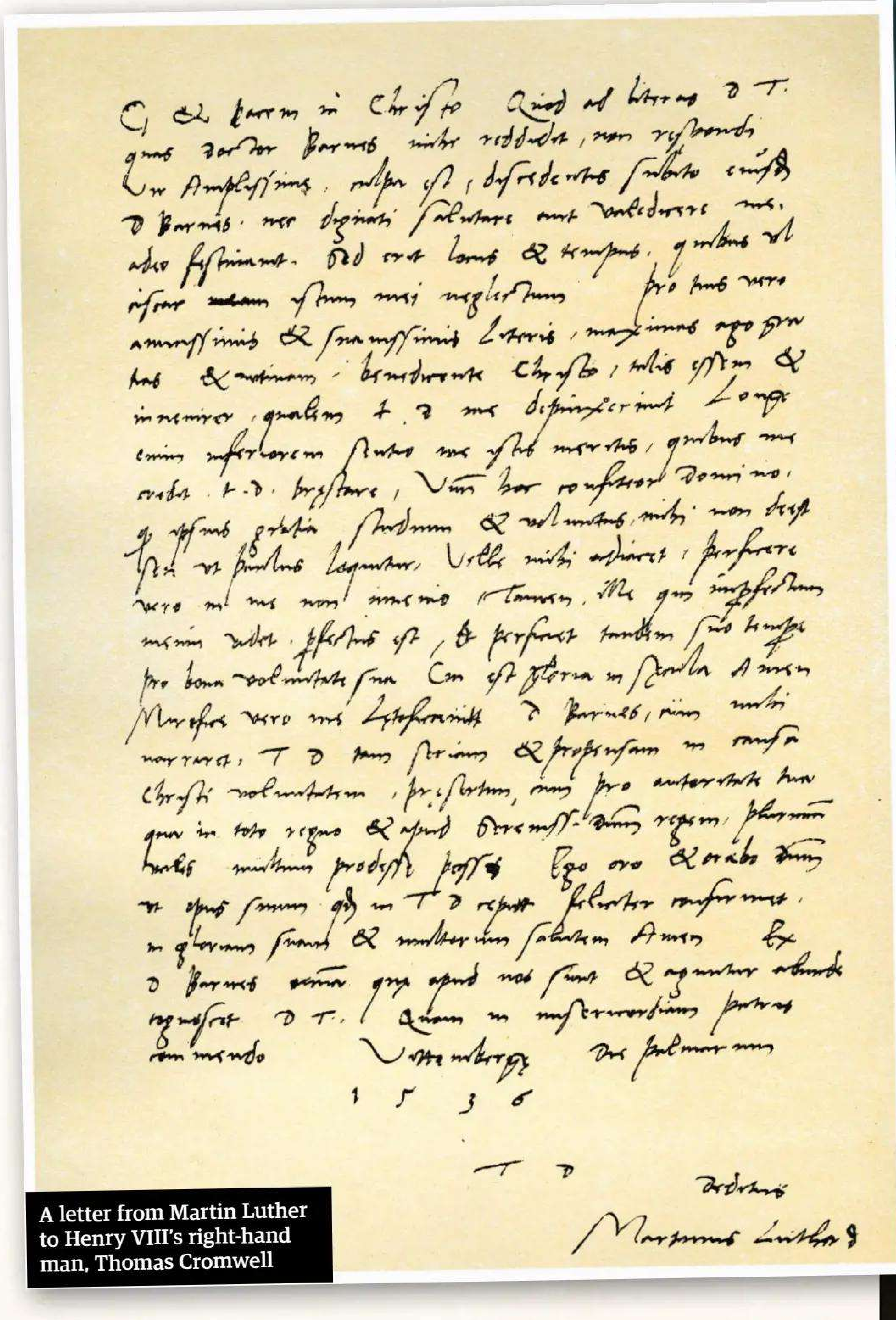
ELIZABETH'S COMPROMISE

Elizabeth loathed all the extremists. She was of a moderate Protestant persuasion and liked a measure of ornamentation in church (which the Puritans condemned as papist). She had a new Act of Uniformity passed, which restored the 1552 Prayer Book, with minor alterations (which the Catholics considered to be heretical). The queen's instinct was to exercise as much tolerance as possible, desiring only loyalty and outward conformity from her subjects. The more extreme Puritans regarded this as sinful compromise with the truth as laid down in Scripture. Some ministers refused to wear vestments. Some wanted to abolish the office of bishop and establish a 'presbyterian' form of government such as existed in Geneva and which, as they believed, followed the pattern laid down in the New Testament. Yet what in Elizabeth's eyes was worse was the attitude of some Puritan spokesmen to her royal person. In Geneva the civic rulers were accustomed to being guided and held to account by the ministers. Some returned exiles did not refrain from telling Elizabeth to her face how she ought to behave. In 1576, after such a lecture, she suspended the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The tensions between the Puritans and the supporters of the established Church became worse. In 1588-89 a series of pamphlets, the *Marprelate Tracts*, were published, denouncing the alleged failings of the bishops. Other radicals did what dissidents had done before them; they separated from the established Church and began worshipping in independent groups. Dissatisfaction with the status quo produced a sub-culture of seekers looking for they knew not what. They coalesced into groups, becoming the first of the English Independents, or Congregationalists.

Before the end of Elizabeth's reign these extremists had their first martyrs. Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood established a congregation called the Brothers of the Separation. A fundamental tenet of their doctrine was that, unlike the national Church, in which, as the Prayer Book stated 'the bad be ever mingled with the good', God's people were easily identifiable and distinctive. They could not be tainted by association with Christians who were not perfect. The government had no desire to persecute such eccentrics but Barrowe and Greenwood drew attention to themselves by writing pamphlets denouncing the establishment. They spent spells in prison and, in 1598, were charged with the capital crime of publishing seditious books. They were found guilty and duly sentenced. They were given every opportunity to admit their error but they refused and gained what they regarded as a martyr's death. It is against this background that we need to understand the determination of some Separatists to leave their own land.

Image Source ✱ Getty Images.



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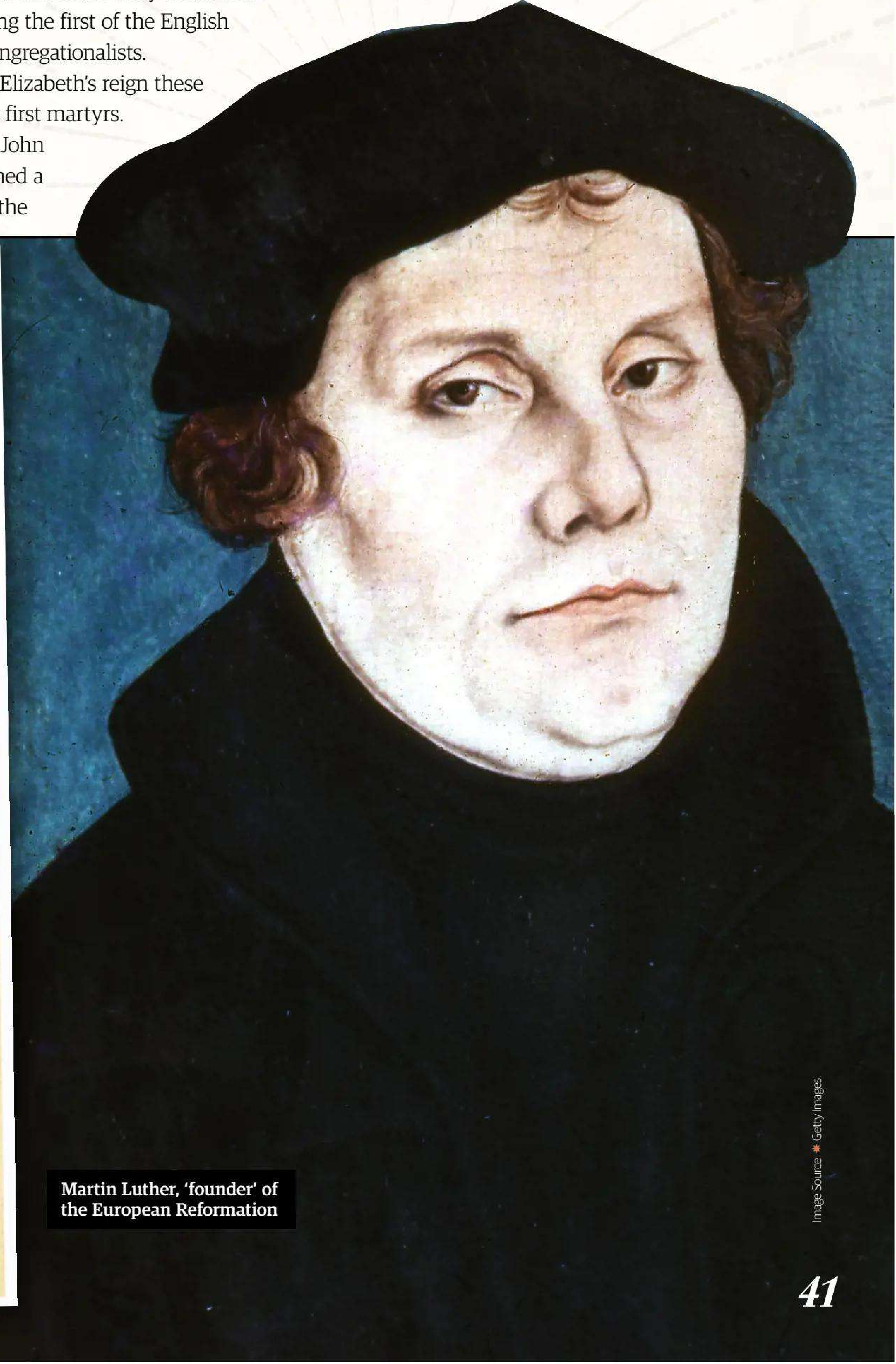
Martinus Luther

A letter from Martin Luther to Henry VIII's right-hand man, Thomas Cromwell



Martin Luther, 'founder' of the European Reformation

Image Source ✱ Getty Images.

CATHOLIC HYSTERIA

From 1570 to 1680, Protestant England was besieged by rumours of a Catholic conspiracy. But how much was true, how much was fake news?

In 1680 England was in a state of crisis. Allegations had been made in a manuscript by ex-priest Titus Oates of a clandestine fifth column of Catholics operating in secret. This group had the motive and – with the help of Catholic France and Ireland – the means to carry out their threat: to invade England, overthrow the king, burn London to the ground and install the Duke of York, who had known Catholic sympathies, as king, under the Pope. When the magistrate investigating the claims in the manuscript, Sir Edmundberry Godfrey, was mysteriously murdered, panic set in. The plot took on a life of its own. With nothing more than Oates as a star witness, members of the House of Lords were impeached and duly executed for their supposed involvement in the plot. The queen's physician, Sir George Wakeman, and the queen herself were placed under suspicion. Meanwhile, Protestant-minded MPs came together to pass acts of parliament at first limiting the powers of the Duke of York and then to explicitly exclude him from the line of succession. Charles only managed to stop the rebels by dissolving parliament. The tension in London was palpable. There were genuine fears a second civil war might break out.

There was just one problem. The allegations had been completely made up by Oates, a serial liar and fantasist who revelled in the celebrity status that being the mouthpiece of the so-called Popish Plot brought him.

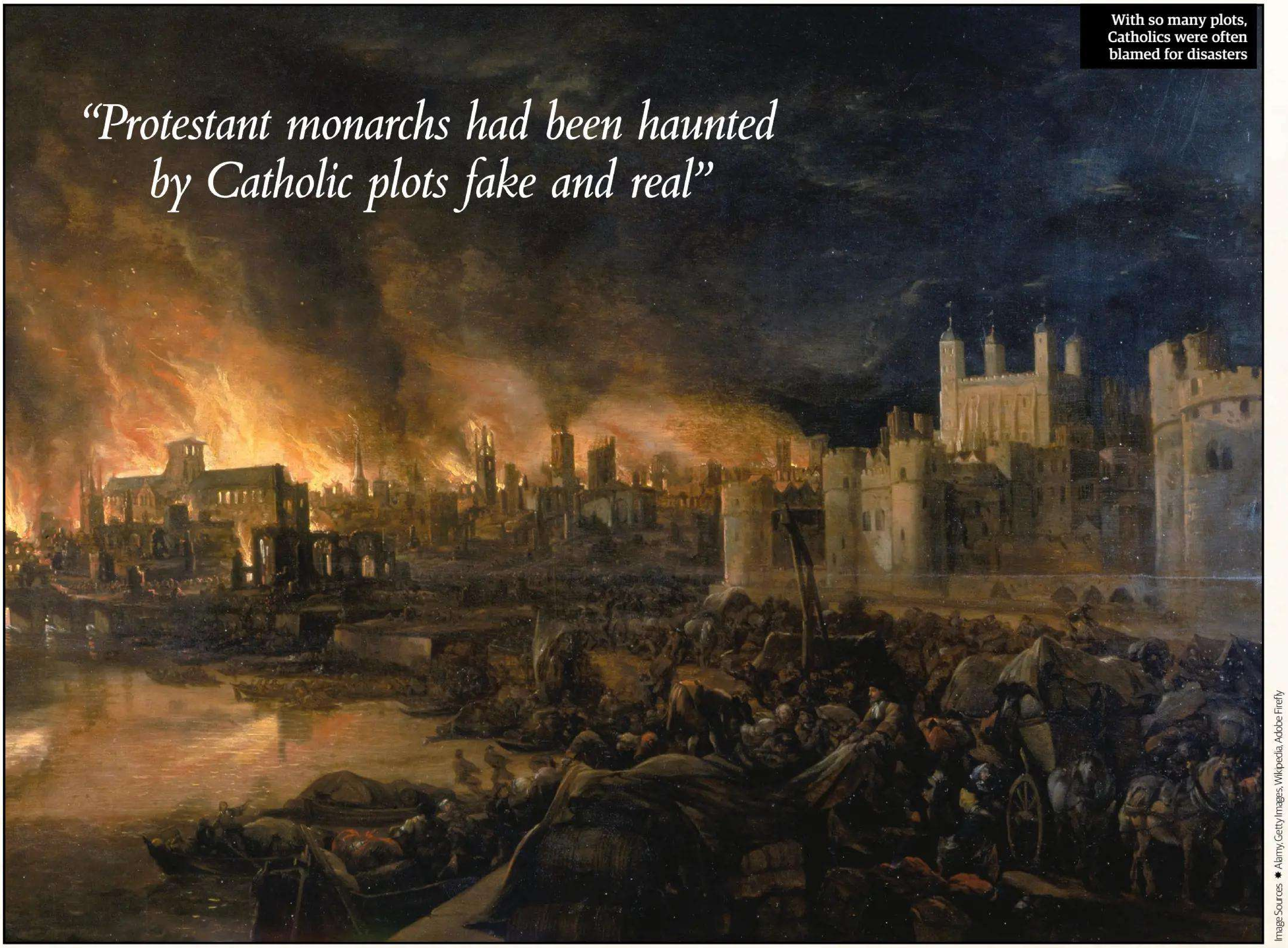
But why were the public and the government so keen to take Oates at his word? Was this all just about Catholicism? Were the people generally fearful of Catholic threats or was Catholicism just a way of talking about other's anxieties? Certainly, there was fear of change as the Early Modern reached its zenith and colonial rivalries in the new world led to new ways of trading and a more advanced economy back home. Then there was England's increasingly fraught relationship with its nearest neighbours Scotland and Ireland, and underlining it all were unanswered questions from the Civil War and the Reformation about the relationship between monarch and parliament, and Church and State.

THE MONARCH'S FAITH

For over a century successive Protestant monarchs from Elizabeth I to Charles II had been haunted by Catholic plots, fake and real. The tension has its origins in the 1530s. Historians largely agree that Henry VIII's break with Rome had little to do with religious doctrine. His key aim was to assert his monarchical authority over the Papacy, with the key doctrinal tenants of Catholicism remaining in place. It was only when Henry's young son Edward VI became king in a regency, overseen by Protestant nobles, that a fissure erupted as successive monarchs tried to force their own religion on the country.

Succeeding Edward VI, Mary I earned the nickname Bloody Mary for her attempts at re-Catholicising the country in the 1550s – burning those at the stake who refused to recant and marrying the Catholic King of Spain to reaffirm England's commitment to Catholicism.

The challenge for Mary's successor Elizabeth I was how to bring the country back together in a way that allowed Catholics and Protestants to



With so many plots, Catholics were often blamed for disasters

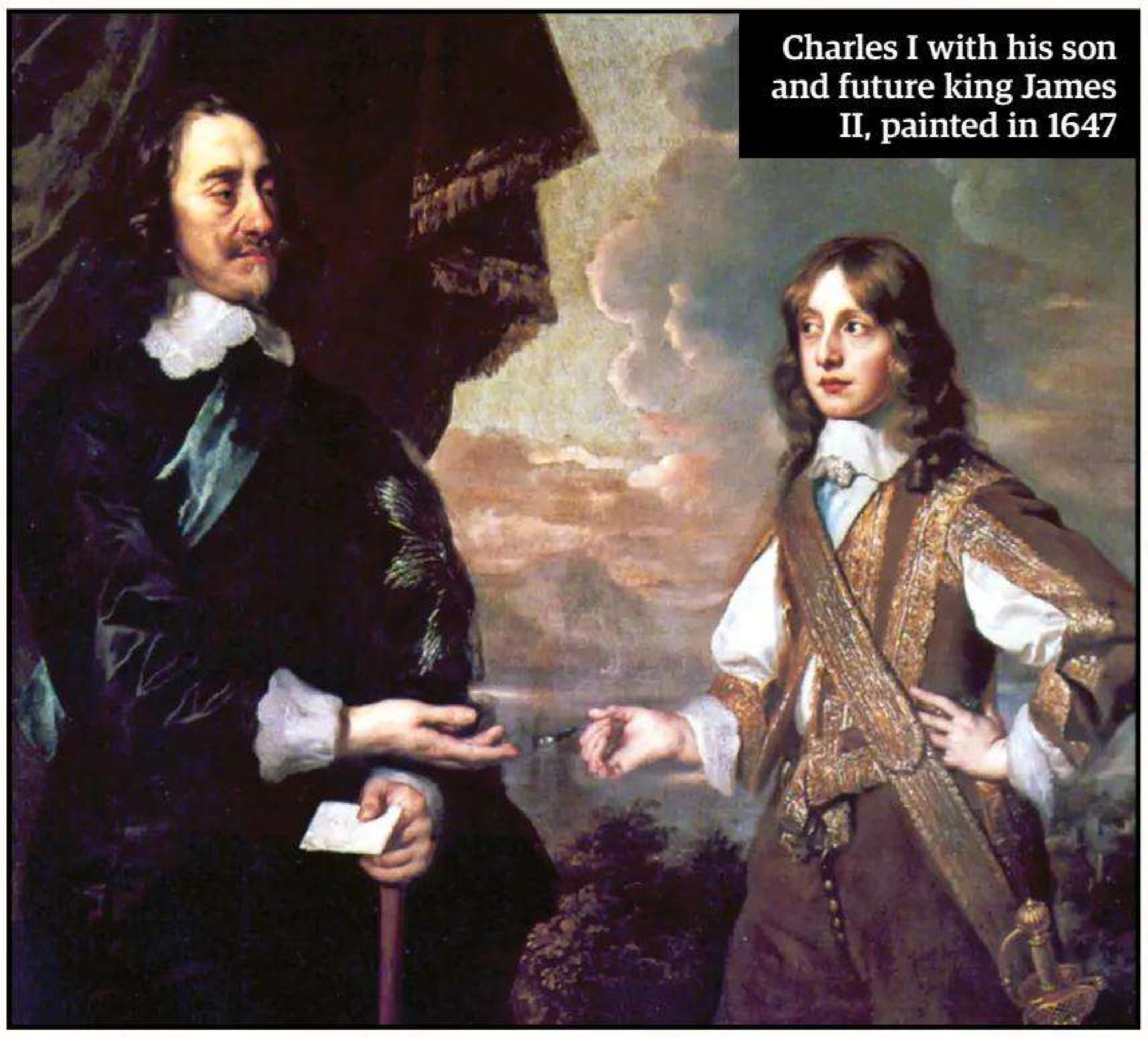
"Protestant monarchs had been haunted by Catholic plots fake and real"

Image Sources ✱ Alamy, Getty Images, Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

live side-by-side. Her initial religious settlement can largely be characterised as a softer version of Edward VI's Protestantism. She took the title of Supreme Governor rather than Head of the Church and allowed some elements of the Catholic doctrine to remain.

To begin with Catholics were generally allowed to practice in private, so long as they attended church services regularly. The Act of Supremacy 1559 also offered a more limited definition of what constituted heresy. What was at issue was the monarch's authority, not doctrinal issues themselves. However, by the 1580s this policy completely fell apart. A whole series of Catholic plots were exposed and halted by Elizabeth I's spy chief Francis Walsingham. The most famous of which - the Babington Plot - involved Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, then under house arrest in England after she was deposed from the Scottish throne. Elizabeth had no choice but to act. The tolerance she had extended to the Catholics, who were uncompromising in their own beliefs, was clearly being interpreted as a sign of weakness. In 1587, begrudgingly, she executed Mary which precipitated more or less open warfare with Catholic Spain.

Elizabeth's 'Protestant' victory over the 'Catholic' Armada in 1588 would help foster the narrative that England, a tiny island that stood alone in Europe and the world, was a special country on the cusp of fulfilling its destiny as a global imperial player against the odds. However, the reality was Elizabeth I's victory hardly settled things. After her death, the entire apparatus of the state came within a hair's breadth of being wiped out. From the king and his heir, to the entire House of Commons and the Lords, all were assembled for the state opening of parliament in November 1605 when a last-minute tip off led to a search of the cellars...

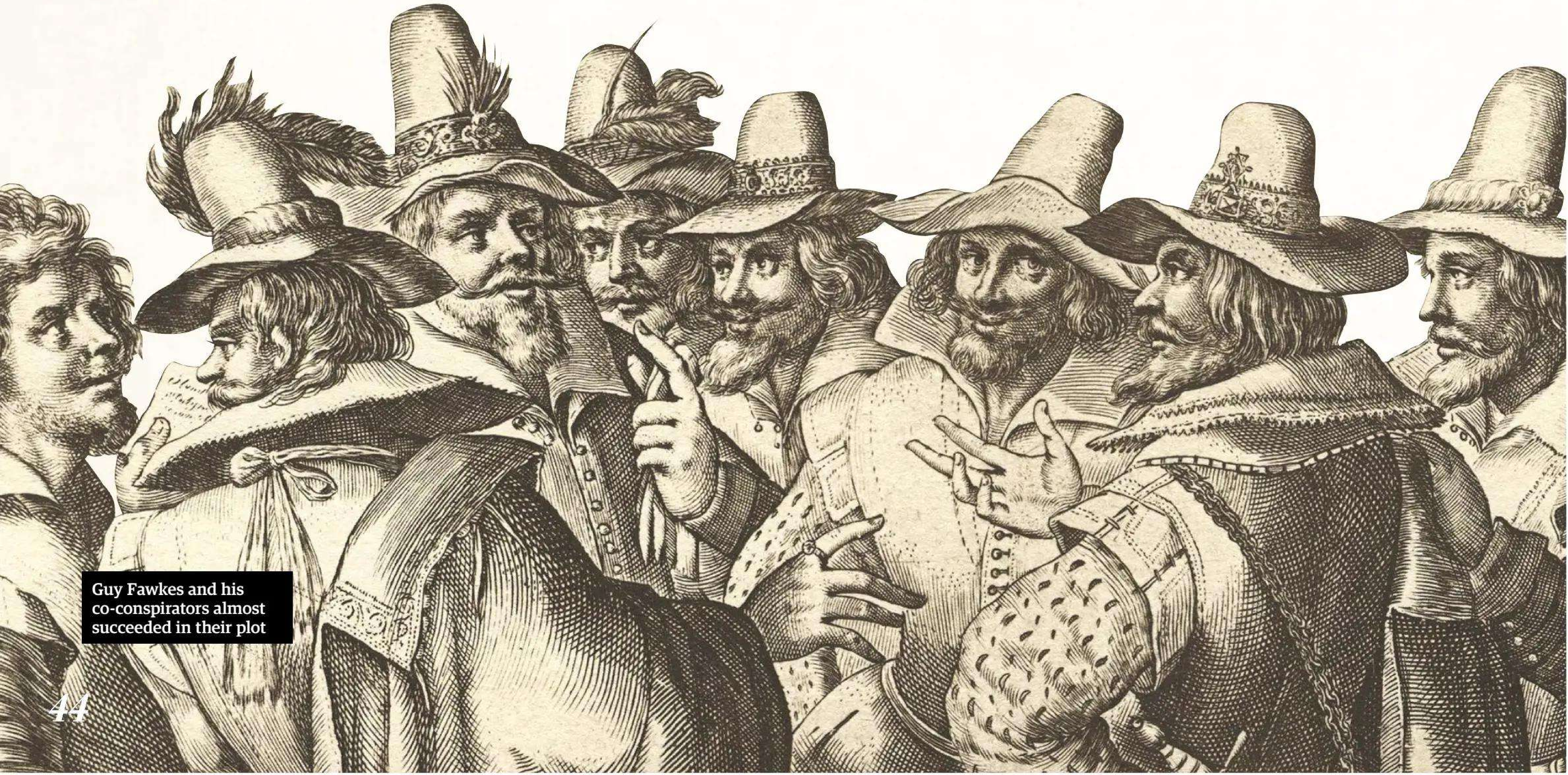

Charles I with his son and future king James II, painted in 1647

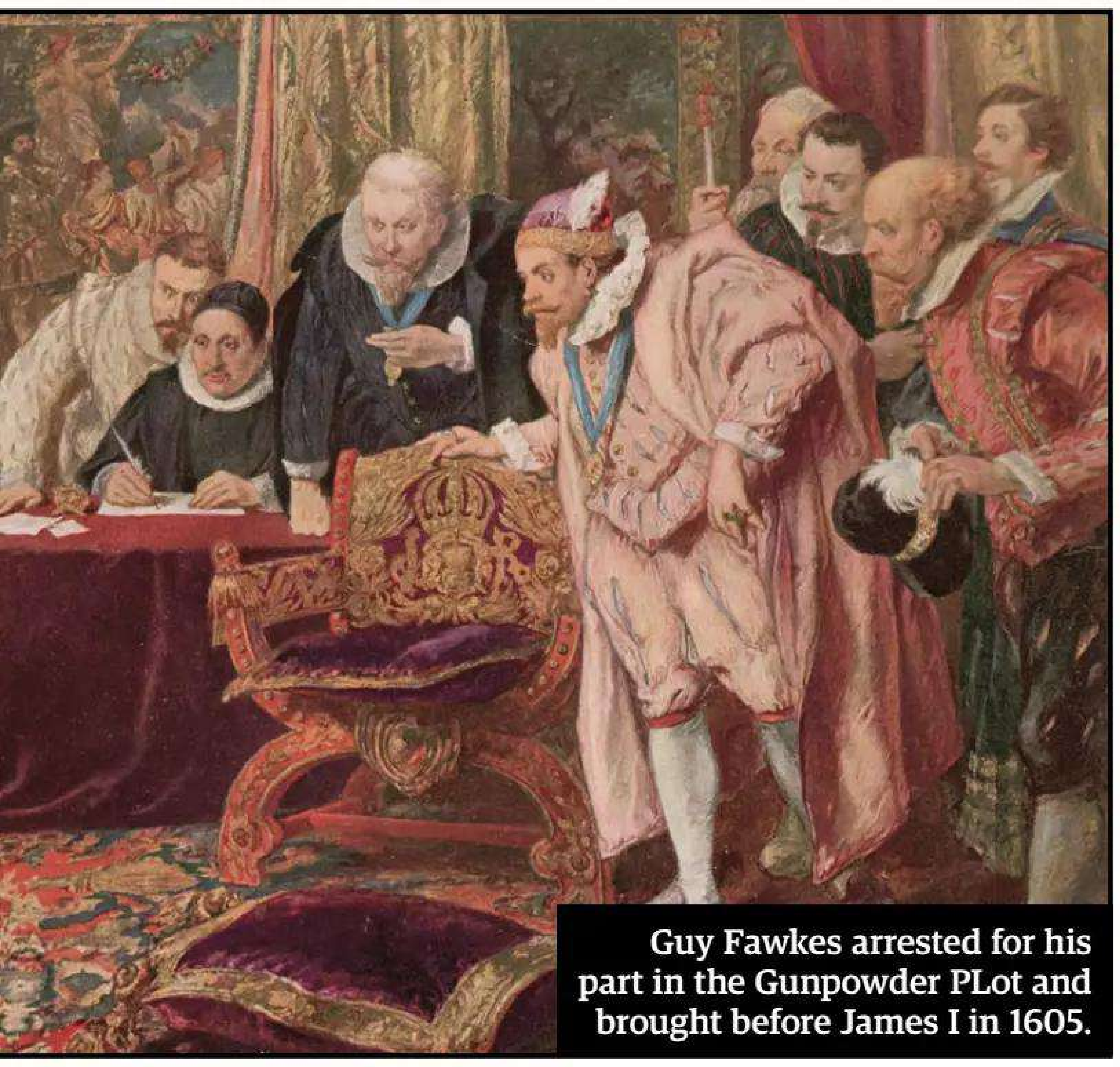
PLOTS TO KILL

For Elizabeth I's successor James VI, raised a Protestant, the Gunpowder Plot shook him to the core. Only two years into his English reign, it reminded him of his vulnerability and shored up his belief in the Divine Right of Kings. His authority alone was what should determine the future of England, as it did in Scotland.For a while everyone in London was under suspicion. You only have to read the later plays of Shakespeare and the bloody revenge tragedies of Thomas Middleton and John Webster to get a sense of the poisonous political climate in the nation.

But the biggest and most profound effect James's regime had was on his second son - Prince Charles - who unexpectedly became heir apparent following the death of his elder brother Henry, Prince of Wales. His first mistake was to take as his wife Henrietta Maria, who was both French and Catholic. Gossip and rumour began as to how

"A whole series of Catholic plots were exposed and halted by Francis Walsingham"


Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators almost succeeded in their plot



Guy Fawkes arrested for his part in the Gunpowder PLot and brought before James I in 1605.

the Supreme Governor of the Church could be married to a Catholic. When he acceded as Charles I he refused to compromise and ruled without parliament for years at a time. Matters of state religion, of tax rates, of war and peace, all were - in the king's mind - solely his domain. Parliament was, at best, an advising chamber designed to help him rule and, at worst, merely an exercise in rubber stamping. But for all the blood spilt in the showdown between king and parliament in the Civil War and the equally tumultuous years of the interregnum - the years between the kings - the underlying issues between the role of parliament and king, Church and religion were not resolved.

CATHOLIC QUESTIONS

It might be easy to think that the execution of his father at the hands of the parliamentary elite in 1649 was more than enough to motivate Charles II into toeing the line when he was finally restored in 1660. However, the role of the monarch was essentially unchanged. There was nothing to stop Charles II from dissolving parliament and ruling on his own if he so wished. There were also fears that his attempts to legislate for religious toleration by way of the Royal Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, which relaxed the Act of Uniformity, were seen as a slippery slope. Was Charles trying to turn England Catholic once again?

As Charles continued to govern in the country at large, but particularly in London, the embers of suspicion and innuendo that would ignite the capital in the late 1670s simmered gently. This was in part not just because of the political system, which largely kept ordinary people excluded from debate, but also because of the printing press and increased literacy, which was at a record highs in the capital.

Newspapers circulated around the capital where people lived together in close quarters claiming

Play Your Cards Right with Titus Oates

Higher or lower? An ace of spades or a queen of hearts? How playing cards helped spread the word about Titus Oates' plot

During the Popish Plot a series of playing cards depicting the various elements of the conspiracy circulated around public houses. The cynical, almost satirical nature of some of the images - for example the one of hearts that shows the devil under the table as the Pope and the cardinals conspire - suggests they had a similar purpose to secret histories. The cards seem to be less about educating players about the events of the plot, but to entertain players who knew about it already and to entrench preconceived political prejudices.

Q♥

Catherine of Braganza

Charles II's Catholic queen from Portugal had been allowed to keep her Catholic household so she was an easy target for Oates who testified that he had overheard her talking to two jesuits. She had allegedly agreed to be a last resort; if all other attempts failed she would murder her husband.

J

Titus Oates

Oates had a colourful life. Expelled from the Merchant Taylors School in London, he was ordained as a priest but imprisoned for perjury before escaping to join the navy as a chaplain, only to be expelled from that too. Later he even became a chaplain to the most senior Catholic in England, the Duke of Norfolk.

A♠

Sir George Wakeman

In Oates' plot, the queen's physician had allegedly been offered £10,000 to poison Charles II's drinking pot. His acquittal following a trial was a major blow to Oates as it showed that his allegations were starting to lose credibility. He never should have been believed in the first place.

5♥

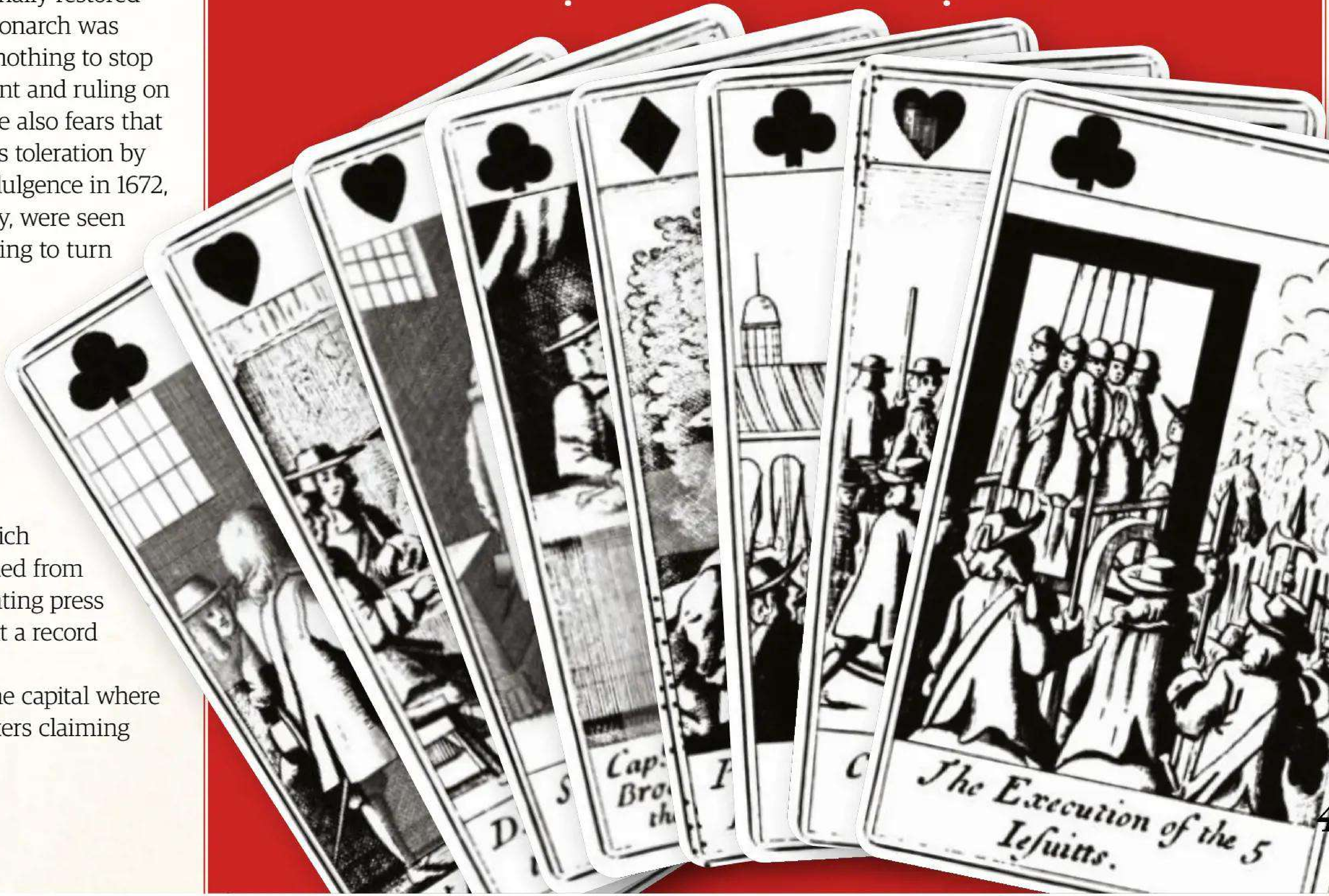
Five Lords

Entirely innocent, five members of the House of Lords were accused of involvement in the plot. As with all High Treason trials, the accused were not permitted access to lawyers whilst the prosecution - the Crown - were entitled to counsel. Most of the members died in prison.

KING

James, Duke of York

In 1672, Charles II passed the Test Act forcing anyone in a public office to swear allegiance to the Anglican Church. James, Duke of York, then the Lord High Admiral, resigned his position rather than take the oath. He became the unwilling spider in a web of plots against his brother, Charles II.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17th Century Fake News

How fabricated new stories, exaggerated accounts and even fake newspapers helped spread the Popish Plot

Sir John Temple's History of the Irish Rebellion

John Temple's 'history' of the Irish Rebellion of 1641-2 was first published in 1646 but republished in the 1670s. The text is subtitled 'Barbarous cruelties and Bloody Massacres which endured thereupon' and is now believed to have greatly exaggerated the events of the rebellion that had taken place.

As historian Ethan Shagan explains, it "contextualised the atrocity […] within a well-established view of history which saw Protestants as a weak and persecuted minority, forever defending themselves against the forces of a popish Antichrist." Temple and those who reprinted the work also failed to adequately point out to readers that Temple was a lawyer and a member of both the English and Irish House of Commons, who had assisted the English government in putting down the rebellion.

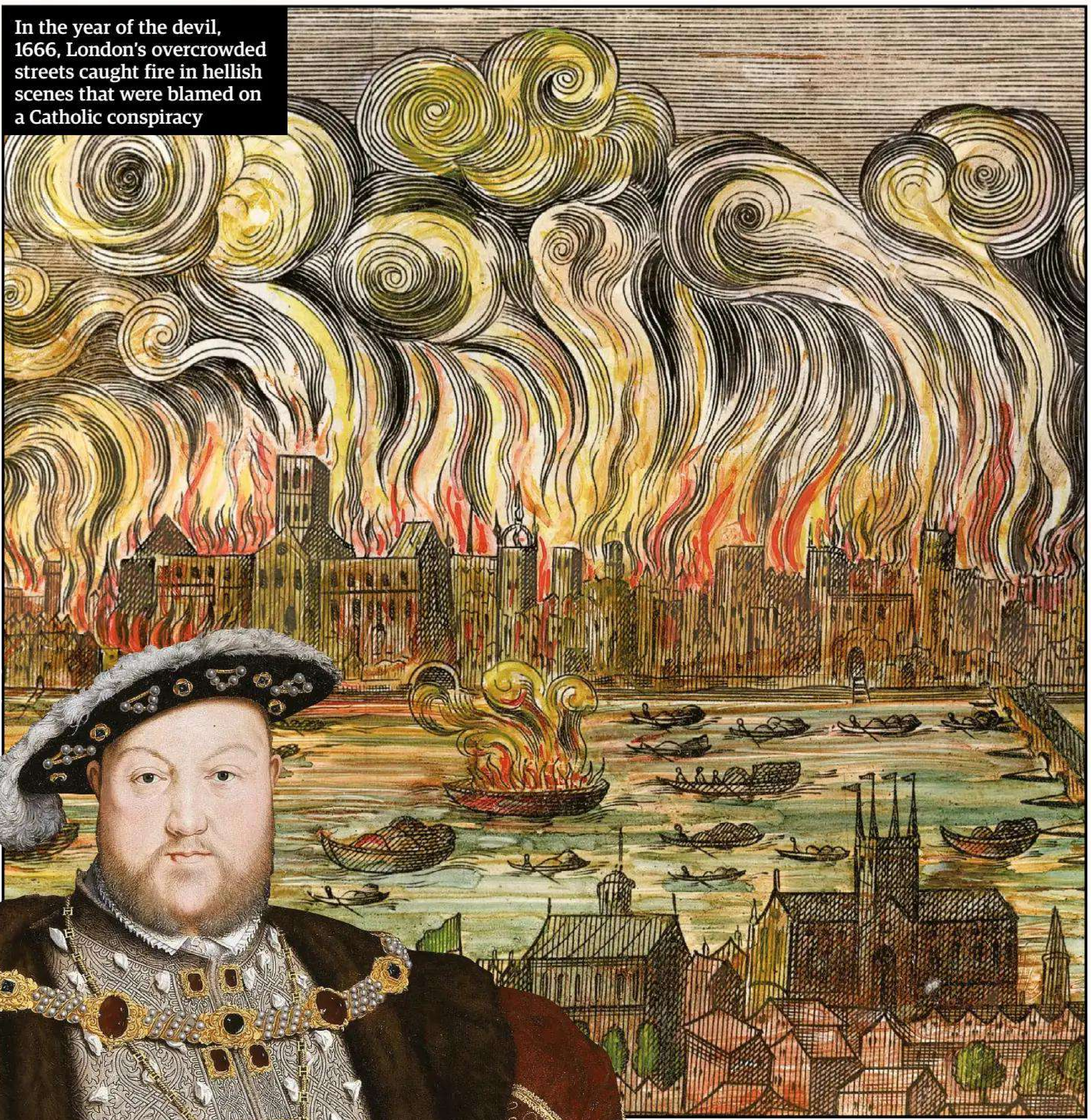
This work was part of a concerted effort to portray Ireland as a lawless place, overrun by Catholics, to the English. Newspapers brought "strange and lamentable news from Ireland," one of which described a "maid at Dublin" who "was found with her flesh burnt off her arms, and lying by her black like burnt leather."

Secret Histories

Titus Oates's explosive manuscript was just one title in what could be described as genre in its own right. *The Secret History Of The Most Renowned Queen Elizabeth And The Earl Of Essex*, anonymously published for 'Will with the Wisp at the sign of the Moon in the Eclipse' in 1680 was full of innuendo about how the queen had been manipulated by her closest minister. Later came the publication of *The Secret History Of The Medicis* (1686) and *The Secret History Of Charles II And James II* (1690) when both were safely in their graves. All were more like conspiracy theories rather than real works of historical scholarship.

'True' Domestik Intelligence

During the lapse of the licensing act, after parliament had been dissolved by Charles II and so MPs could not sit to renew it, Nathaniel Thompson printed a newspaper called the Domestik Intelligence, a copy of an existing paper published by Benjamin Harris. Harris's paper had a strong Whig and therefore pro-exclusionist stance whilst Thompson did not share the same view. Issue 16, dated 26 August 1679 was a hoax and its regular readers would have found a very different political hue to their usual coverage. Eventually, Thompson started printing his paper as the 'True Domestik Intelligence' to distinguish itself from its rival.



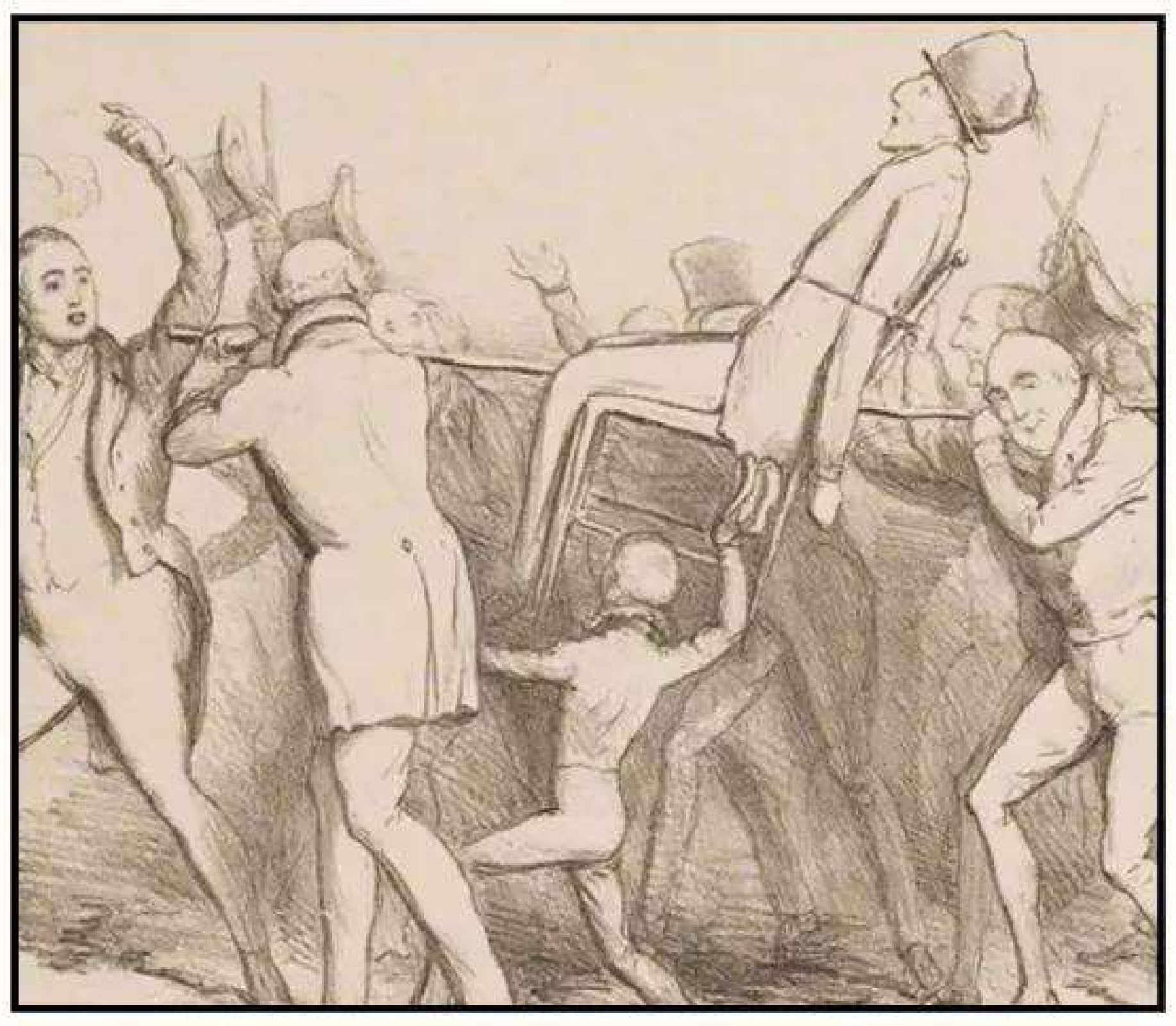
In the year of the devil, 1666, London's overcrowded streets caught fire in hellish scenes that were blamed on a Catholic conspiracy

Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church in Rome sent shockwaves through England: the consequences of the radical move would be felt for centuries to come

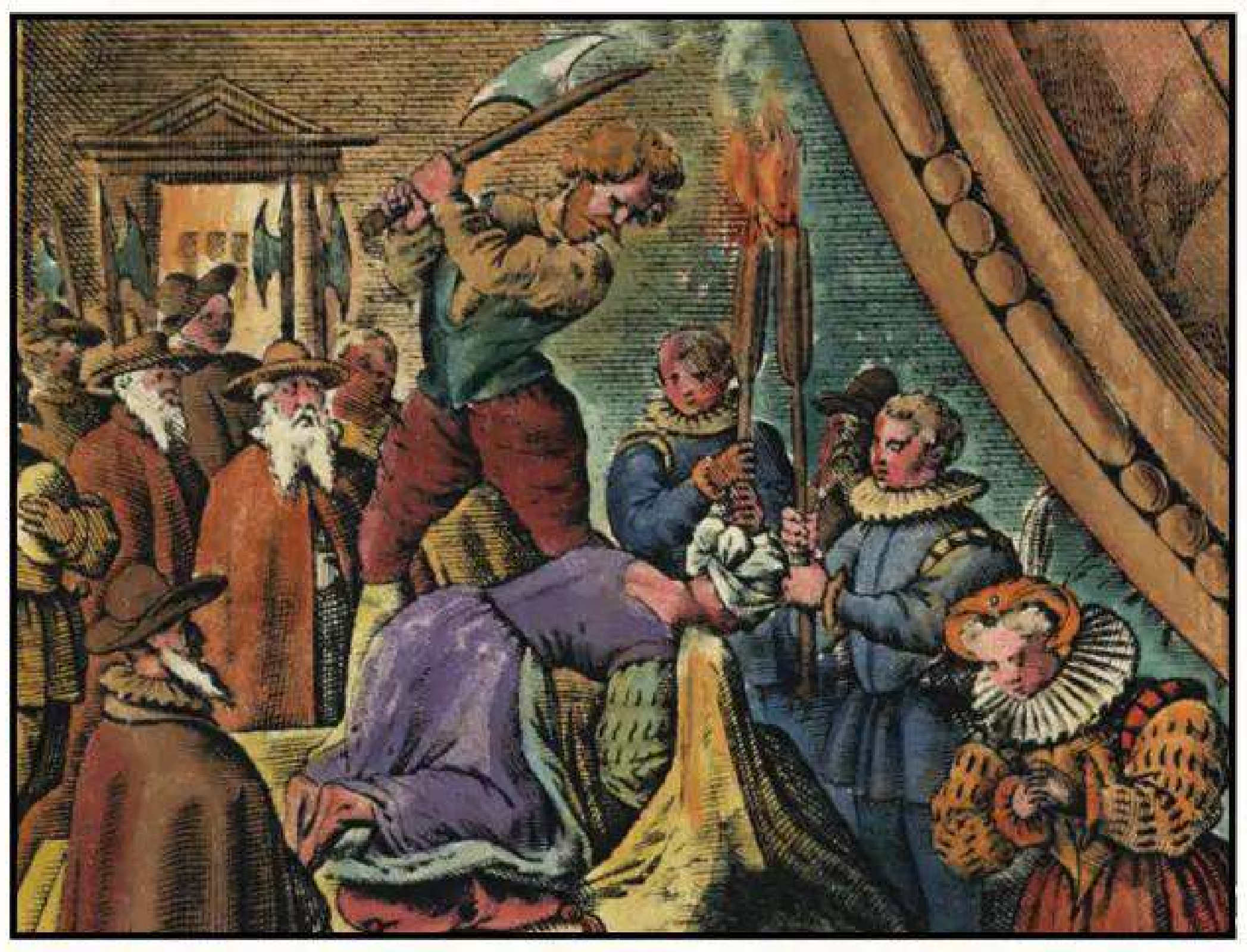
to tell the truth about 'what was really going on' behind closed doors. Titus Oates claimed to have created a 'true account' of the events of the Popish Plot. What made his manuscript seem believable was its emphasis on history and tradition to reiterate its claims.

One example of this is how Oates linked the Great Fire of London in 1666 to Rome and ultimately his Catholic conspiracy. He hinted that burning cities and people (as Mary I had been so keen to demonstrate) was a key technique that originated in Rome. It was in the tradition of the Emperor Nero who was allegedly responsible for burning Rome to the ground but also in the tradition of the devil himself and the fires of hell.

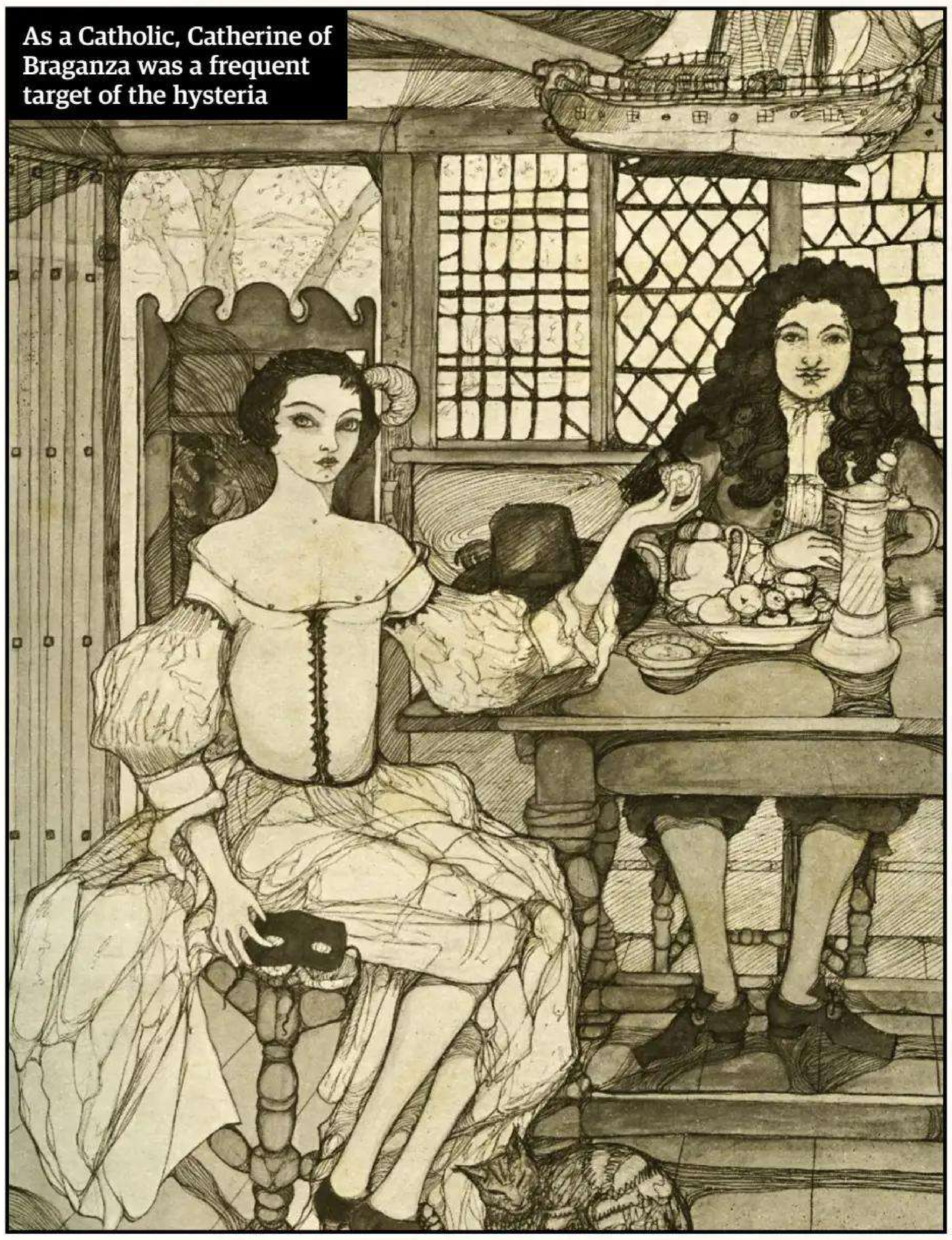
But of course all of these events have focused on England and Wales when there were in fact three independent nations on the British Isles. England's relationship with Scotland and Ireland and the way in which politicians in London shamelessly played countries off against each other, also contributed to the



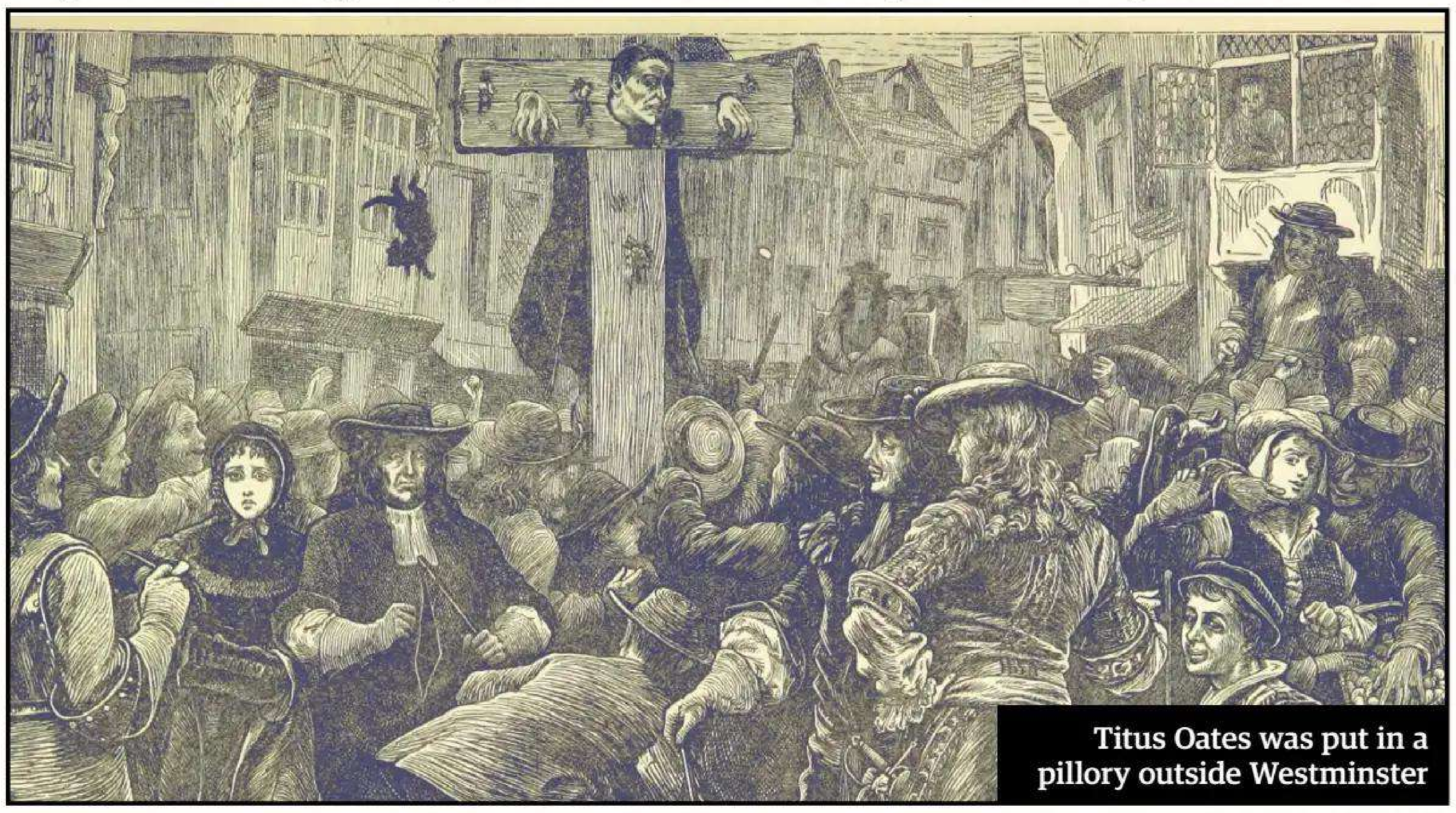
It became a tradition on the anniversary of the plot to burn an effigy of Guy Fawkes



Mary, Queen of Scots, was mercilessly executed in 1587 for her part in the Babington Plot



As a Catholic, Catherine of Braganza was a frequent target of the hysteria



Titus Oates was put in a pillory outside Westminster

> *"James' plan did not go well with his English parliament"*

tensions. England and Scotland had been joined in a Union of the Crowns since the death of Elizabeth I in 1603 and the accession of James VI, already King of Scots. Almost immediately he attempted to join his separate kingdoms in political, as well as monarchical, matrimony.

A UNITED KINGDOM?

But James' plan did not go down well with his English parliament who were concerned that Union was a by-word for Scottish domination and autocratic government. Arguments about England being flooded by poorer, less-educated Scots are best expressed by the Danish Ambassador to England, Christopher Lindenov who recalled that English lords feared "…if union were enacted, most Scots would move to England and Scotland would finally become a waste and unpeopled land." Various trade partnerships were also considered and another attempt at a Union was made in 1670 but both failed. The fear persisted that Charles II had the same motives as his grandfather, to pursue a Union for political purposes - to make it easier to govern England with the backing of Scottish MPs.

It is clear that Scots were largely in favour of the continuation of the monarchy under the Duke of York - the Stuarts were after all a Scottish dynasty - and a parliament that had Scottish MPs may not have passed the exclusion bills. Equally, had the king given royal assent to the exclusion bills in England then the Duke would still have eventually become King of Scots and England would have a different monarch when Charles II died - his illegitimate son the Duke of Monmouth, a likely contender. The tensions this created may well have started a war between the two countries. During the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, the Duke was sent to the Scottish Highlands, ostensibly to keep him away from London. In the minds of the plotters this was just another sign that Charles was preparing an invasion from the north should a Civil War break out or trust in the monarchy collapse.

Ireland had a Catholic majority, despite attempts by Cromwell to create Protestant settlements on the island. It also had a bogus democratic structure. Poynings' Law effectively gave the English Privy Council a power of veto over Irish law and the size of upper chamber was 'inflated' - tripled in size - by the Stuarts so it did not accurately represent the religious makeup of the country. However, whilst this might seem repressive, the reality of governing Ireland required accepting a larger degree of tolerance towards Catholics than would have been acceptable in England.Historian RF Forster describes how "A Catholic schoolmaster was teaching in every parish in Limerick in 1670" and the Catholic Church during the 1670s was "lively, active and increasingly visible" whilst Catholics owned around 29% of the land. Back home in England this reality was ignored.

Despite the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II got his way. Titus Oates was exposed as perjurer and sent to the stocks and the Duke of York succeeded him as James II/VII in 1685. But his reign was - predictably - disastrous.

His attempts to re-introduce Catholicism ended with him being forced to flee England in disgrace.

When his daughter Mary and her husband Prince William of Orange were installed as joint sovereigns in 1688 it was on the condition that they upheld a Bill of Rights. No Catholic would ever take the throne again and England would now have a constitutional monarchy, in which, increasingly, parliament led the country and the monarchy became merely a symbol. The rifts and factions regarding religion and the right to rule that had plagued England for 100 years were - for a time - put to bed at last.

REBELS AND RECUSANTS

After the Reformation, the Catholics of England were caught between the rock of their faith and the hard place of increasing state persecution

For at least 900 years, England had been a Christian nation. For most of that time, the English had a special devotion to the papacy, for Pope Gregory was remembered as the man who had begun the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons when he dispatched a party of monks to Britain in 597. Such was the prestige of the Church that Henry II, one of the most powerful and wilful of all medieval monarchs, had to perform public penance in reparation for the murder of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

But kings do not like sharing power. In England, the Reformation began with Henry wresting power from the Pope (and coincidentally hugely enriching the Crown by seizing monastic possessions). However, it developed into a contest between different versions of Christianity, a contest that the Reformers won during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Many of Elizabeth's most powerful nobles were Catholic, so at the start of her reign she proceeded with caution. The rich and the powerful were left to practice their faith in peace so long as they did so quietly, but the poor were persecuted.

However, the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, had a rival claim to the throne and she became the focus of plots to replace Elizabeth with a Catholic queen. Then, when Pope Pius V excommunicated the queen and war broke out between England and Spain, Elizabeth decided that all the Catholics in her realm were potential traitors. In 1584, Parliament passed an Act requiring all Catholic priests to leave the country within 40 days or be executed for treason.The Old Faith went underground. Elizabeth's spy master, Francis Walsingham, employed informers and spies to crack the networks that shielded Catholic priests as they attempted to minister to the faithful. This was the time of priest holes and vicious, brutal executions: Edmund Campion was hung, drawn and quartered after having endured imprisonment in Little Ease, a cell in the Tower of London designed so that a captive could neither stand upright nor sit down to rest.

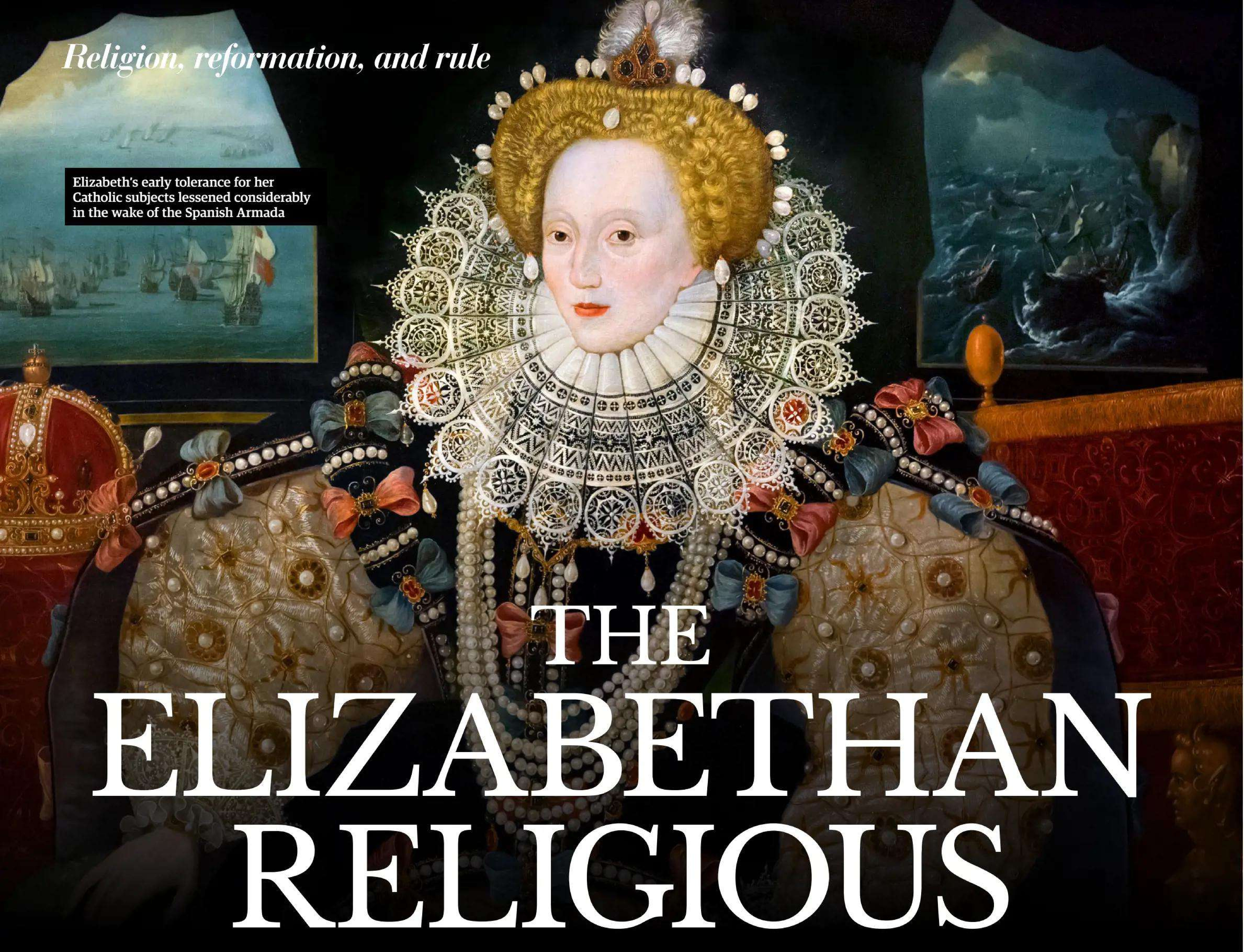
However, as Elizabeth's health began to fail, England's Catholics had reason to hope that a new, more tolerant time would begin. Catholics and Catholic sympathisers corresponded with James VI, heir to the throne and son of Mary, Queen of Scots. In his answers, James intimated that he would treat his Catholic subjects with more kindness than Elizabeth. Indeed, early in 1603, Thomas Percy, cousin to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, sought out James, who assured him that he would not "persecute any that would be quiet and give but an outward obedience to the law".

It seemed an assurance of better times. Catholics in England believed that James had promised to stop their persecution.

So when he was crowned and the persecution continued, the disappointment they felt turned quickly to betrayal and anger. If the King's word could not be trusted, then perhaps there was warrant for more direct action.

As son of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, English Catholics hoped that James would prove more tolerant of his mother's co-religionists. Their hopes were disappointed

Image Sources ✱ Alamy



Elizabeth's early tolerance for her Catholic subjects lessened considerably in the wake of the Spanish Armada

THE ELIZABETHAN RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT

For two generations, England had been torn apart by religious disputes. Elizabeth tried to find an accommodation

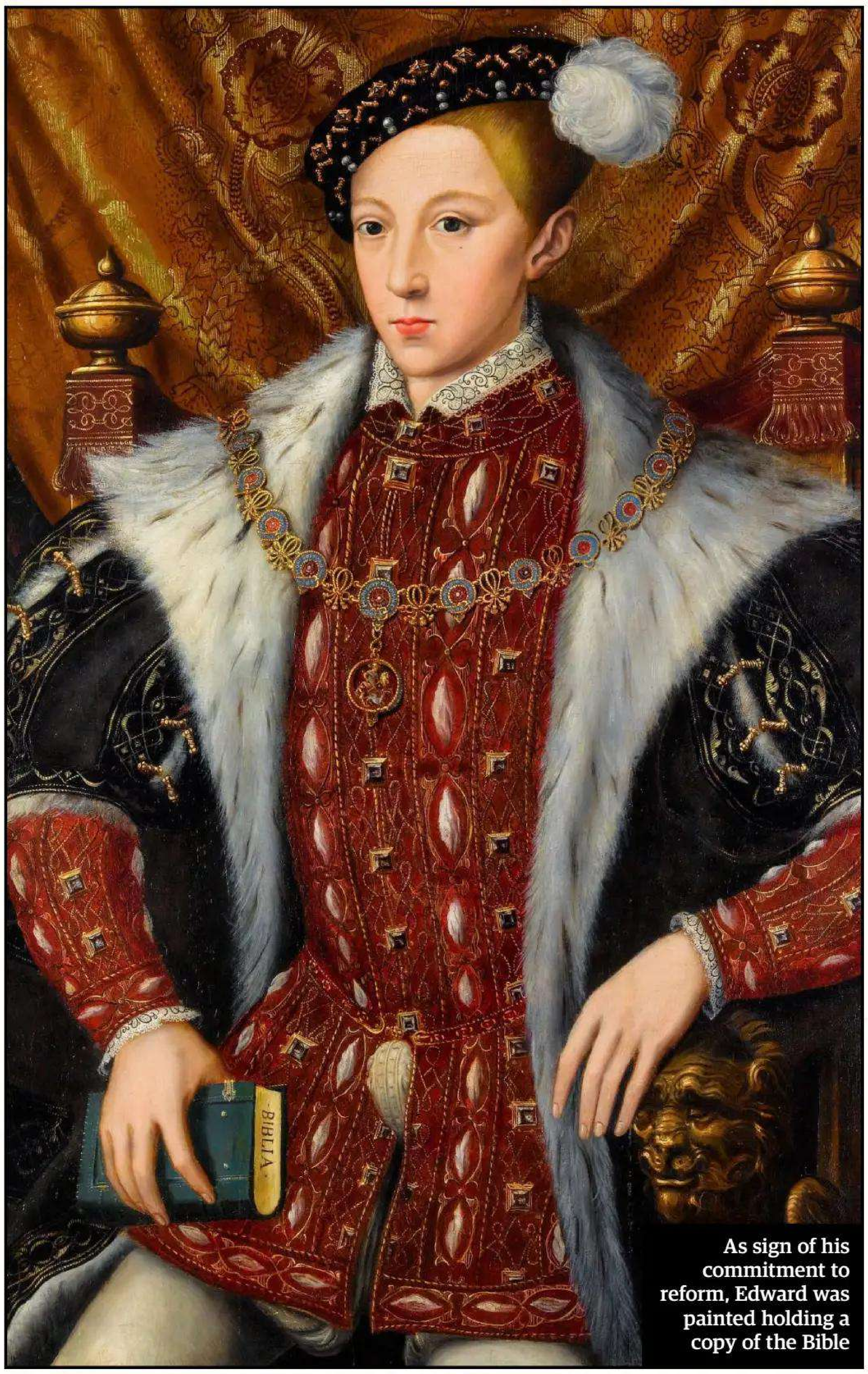
Rather than society forming religion, it's the other way round. Religion determines the fundamental assumptions that governs what people regard as important and what they choose to ignore. England, which had been torn asunder by changes in religion for two generations, was in a mess.

Henry VIII's reformation was focused on wresting power and money from the Church and giving it to the Crown instead. To that end, he had promulgated the Act of Supremacy, making himself head of the church in England and giving himself the power to appoint and sack bishops as he saw fit.

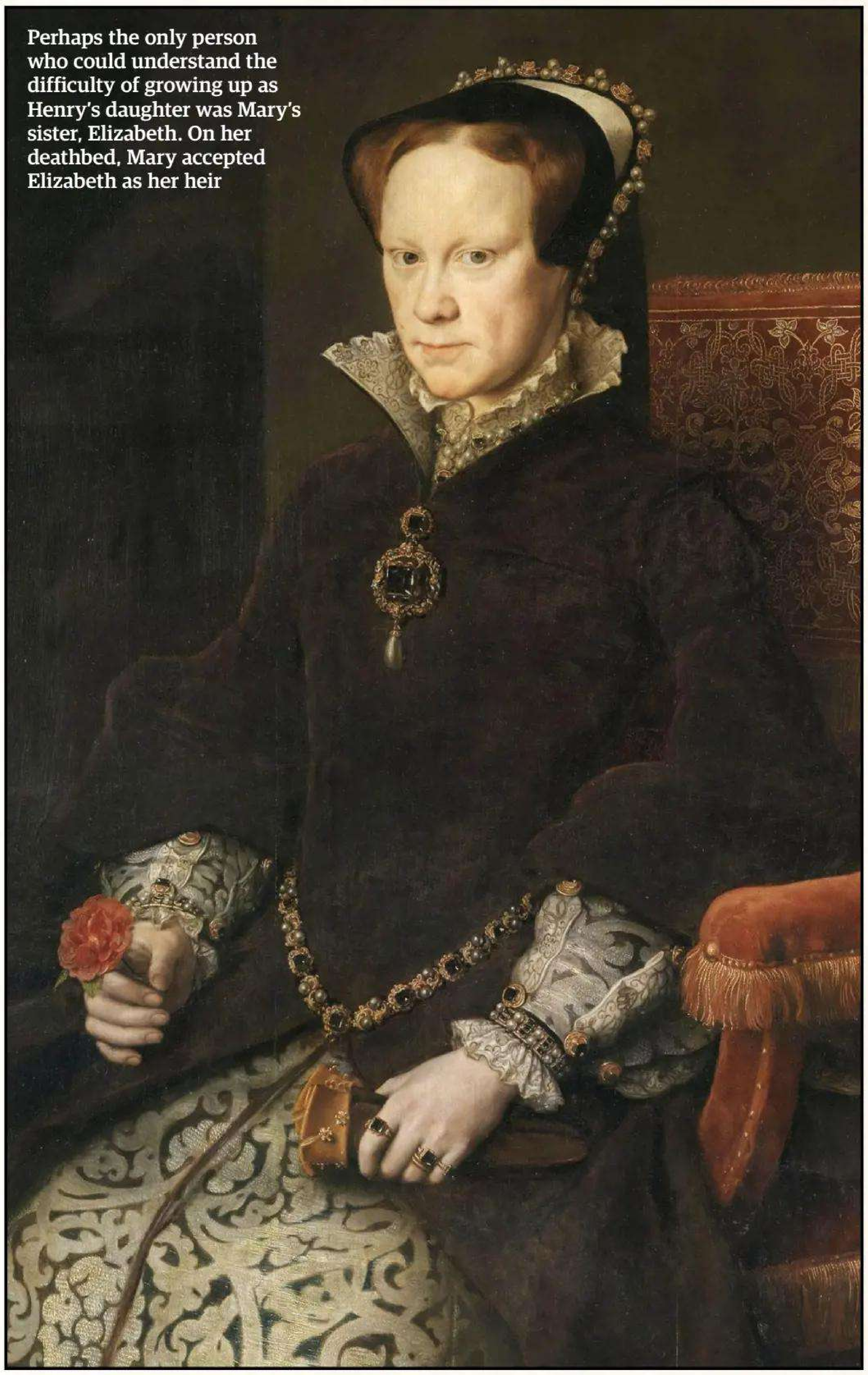
What did it matter that that the Act led to the execution of many men and women whose conscience did not allow them to accept Henry as their master in religion? Henry brought the nobility onside by parcelling out to them the land he took under his control when he closed the monasteries as part of his reforms.

But the Church that Henry created was, in its outward form, still largely Catholic. It was the reign of his fervently Protestant son, Edward, that saw the church in England purged of its remaining Catholic elements: frescoes were whitewashed, statues defaced, shrines broken.

The Reformers wanted nothing but the pure Word of God: a religion stripped of what they regarded as human accretions. However, Edward died after a reign of only six years, to be succeeded by his fervently Catholic elder half-sister, Mary.



As sign of his commitment to reform, Edward was painted holding a copy of the Bible



Perhaps the only person who could understand the difficulty of growing up as Henry's daughter was Mary's sister, Elizabeth. On her deathbed, Mary accepted Elizabeth as her heir

> *"The new Church of England that Henry VIII created was, in its outward form, still largely Catholic"*

Initially, Mary's restoration of the Catholic religion in England was welcomed. However, there was a small but fervent Protestant minority prepared to die for their faith and Mary, in failing health, made the mistake of indulging them.

That left Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, as queen. Boleyn had been a convinced proponent of the Protestant Reformation but her daughter was more pragmatic. The Elizabethan Religious Settlement was the mix of law and practice that she enacted during her reign to try to keep her fractious country together while maintaining what were, for her, the core principles of the Reformation. These were her own role as head of the Church, that the service should be in English rather than Latin, and that the central ritual of the service was a memorial to the death of Jesus rather than its ritual re-enactment as stated in Catholic theology. However, Elizabeth was happy to allow the outer forms of religion to retain some of the old ways.

In the early years of her reign, Elizabeth largely turned a blind eye to the part of her population that remained committed to the old religion, so long as they did not cause any problems. But restrictions against Catholics grew tighter during her reign. For their part, more radical Protestants believed that reform had not gone far enough.

These fundamental disagreements were put on hold but they still festered. The failure of the Gunpowder Plot determined that England was no longer a Catholic country. But what sort of Protestant nation it would be required a Civil War to decide.

Image Sources ✱ Alamy

A haunting image of Elizabeth painted after her death, with Death hanging over her left shoulder while Time sleeps by her right

THE END OF AN ERA

After spending almost five decades as queen, Elizabeth's glorious reign finally came to an end and gave rise to a new royal dynasty

Robert Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State, sighed with exasperation. He watched as she stood in the middle of the floor, completely motionless. The queen, wallowing in melancholy, had been in the same position for days with no desire to move. Cecil knew that the queen was ill, and that she desperately needed some rest. Plucking up the courage, he walked over to Elizabeth and bravely told her that she must go to bed. The queen looked at him with shock and furiously responded, "The word must is not to be used to princes!" Even on her deathbed, Elizabeth was not to be ordered about.

Queen Elizabeth was one of the most formidable and successful rulers to have ever graced the English throne. Her reign of almost 45 years was a golden age of exploration, trade and culture. She had united England under one church, a contentious issue ever since the reign of her father, King Henry VIII, and turned her country into a global power to be reckoned with.

But Elizabeth's success had come at a price. As a young girl, she had witnessed her father's numerous marriages and obsessive quest for a male heir, which triggered the tragic downfall of her mother. As a young woman, she had watched her half-sister, Queen Mary, fight against the opposition she had faced because of her choice of groom - while Elizabeth herself was caught up in scandalous rumours of an affair with Sir Thomas Seymour, the fourth husband of her stepmother and guardian, Catherine Parr.

Elizabeth had learnt early on just how dangerous personal and indeed sexual relationships could be in a court dominated by intrigue and conspiracy. As well as this, her experiences had taught her that her power as a female ruler would always be questioned if she had a husband. Unsurprisingly, the queen reacted by dragging her heels when it came to the subject of marriage. For years, her advisers had tried in vain to encourage their queen to get married and provide the heir to the English throne.

There were fleeting moments when it appeared that Elizabeth was going to get engaged. The closest she got was to Francis, Duke of Anjou, who was over two decades her junior and someone she cared deeply for. But opposition from the public and her Privy Council, largely because the Duke was both French and a Catholic, forced her to forget about the match. Ultimately, Elizabeth was destined to remain as the Virgin Queen.

With no direct heir to succeed her, the Tudor dynasty was destined to come to an end with Elizabeth. As she grew older and passed the age where she could bear children, it became clear to those closest to the queen that other arrangements would have to be made to secure the English succession.

For the first three decades of Elizabeth's reign her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, was her nearest legitimate heir. But after much back and forth, Mary was eventually beheaded in 1587, after she was implicated in a plot against Elizabeth. At the time of her death, Mary had been kept under house arrest for almost 20 years.

Following Mary's execution her son, James, inherited the Scottish throne as King James VI. In the same instance, he also inherited her legal right to the English throne. For many in England, James was a far more agreeable option to succeed Elizabeth since, unlike his mother, he had been raised as a Protestant.

James was therefore the closest relative and most logical choice to succeed Elizabeth, but she stubbornly refused to name an heir, despite petitions from parliament. The queen knew that the second she officially named a successor, factions would start to form as courtiers would flock to their side. This would lead to conflict and so the queen's hesitation was understandable - but it also plunged the country into a succession crisis.

In the face of the queen's resistance, Cecil knew that the question of the English succession needed to be answered. After all, the peace and stability that Elizabeth had fostered for her country during her long reign depended on it. Taking the matter into his own hands, Cecil decided that the best way forward was to begin secret negotiations with the Scottish king. He hoped that by contacting James, he was ensuring a peaceful transition of power in the event of Elizabeth's death.

But Cecil's desire to initiate contact with James was hindered thanks to his rival at court and Elizabeth's young favourite, Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. They had battled each other for the

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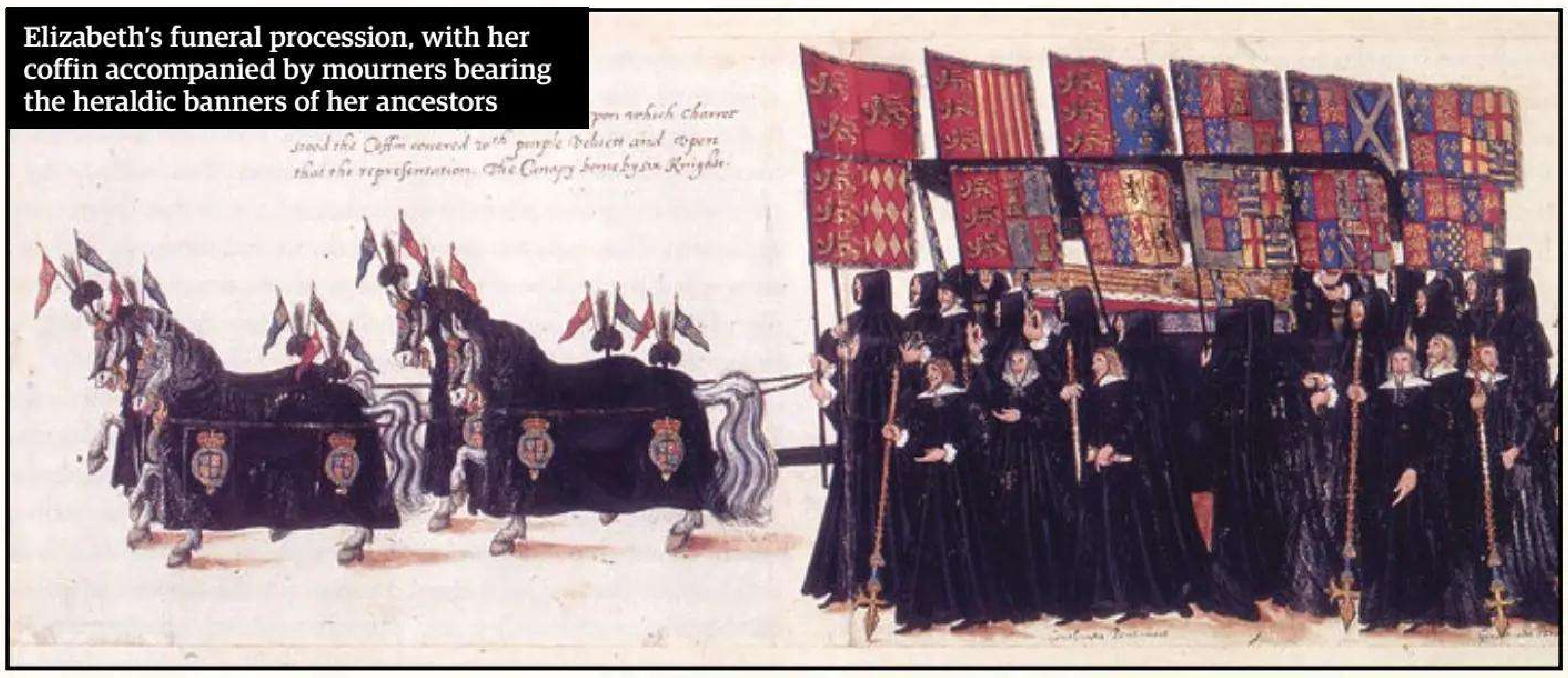
"The death of Essex broke the queen's heart"


Elizabeth's funeral procession, with her coffin accompanied by mourners bearing the heraldic banners of her ancestors

pon which Charret
stood the Coffin covered wth purple Velvett and upon
that the representation. The Canopy borne by six Knights.

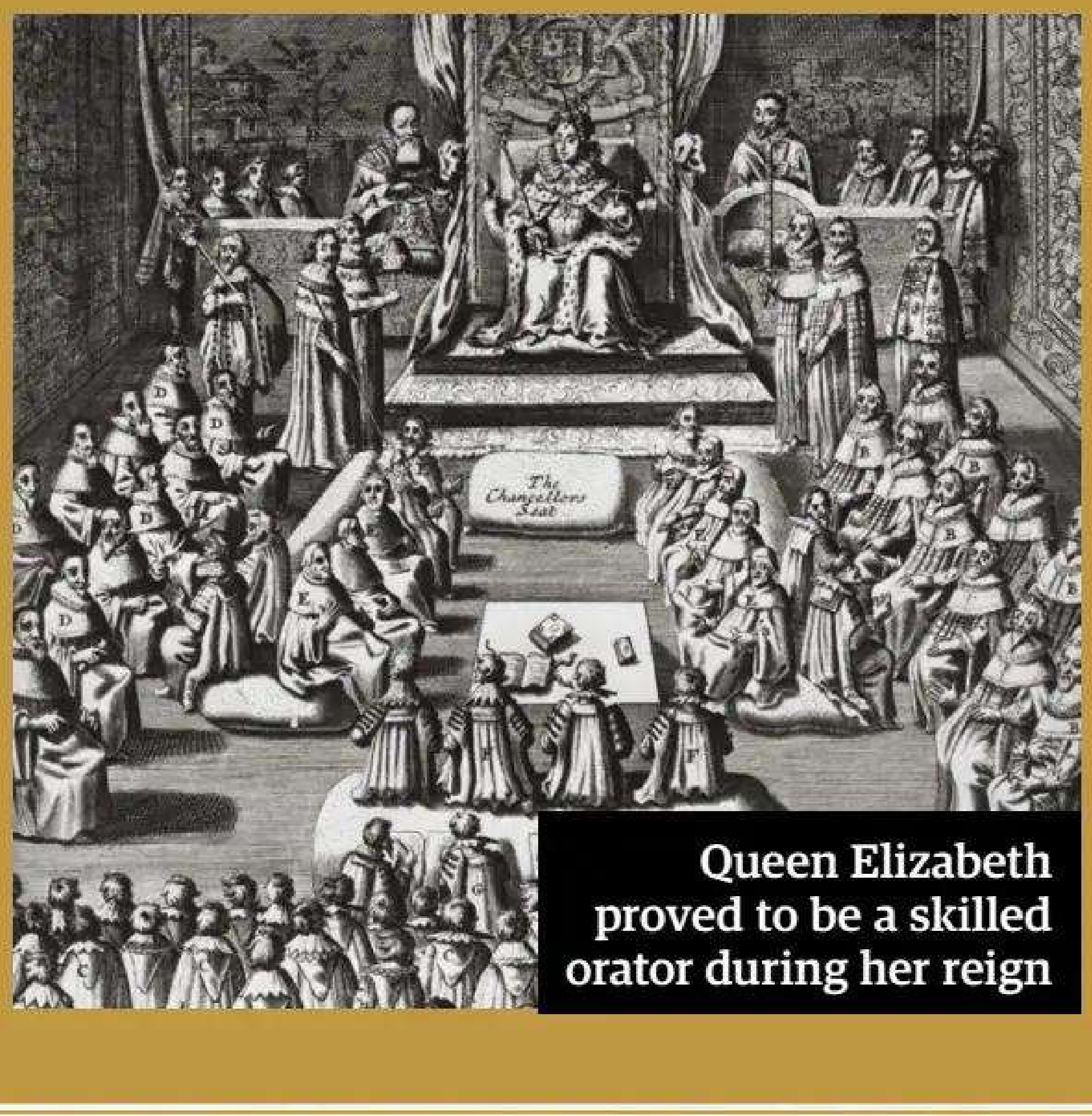
The 'Golden Speech'

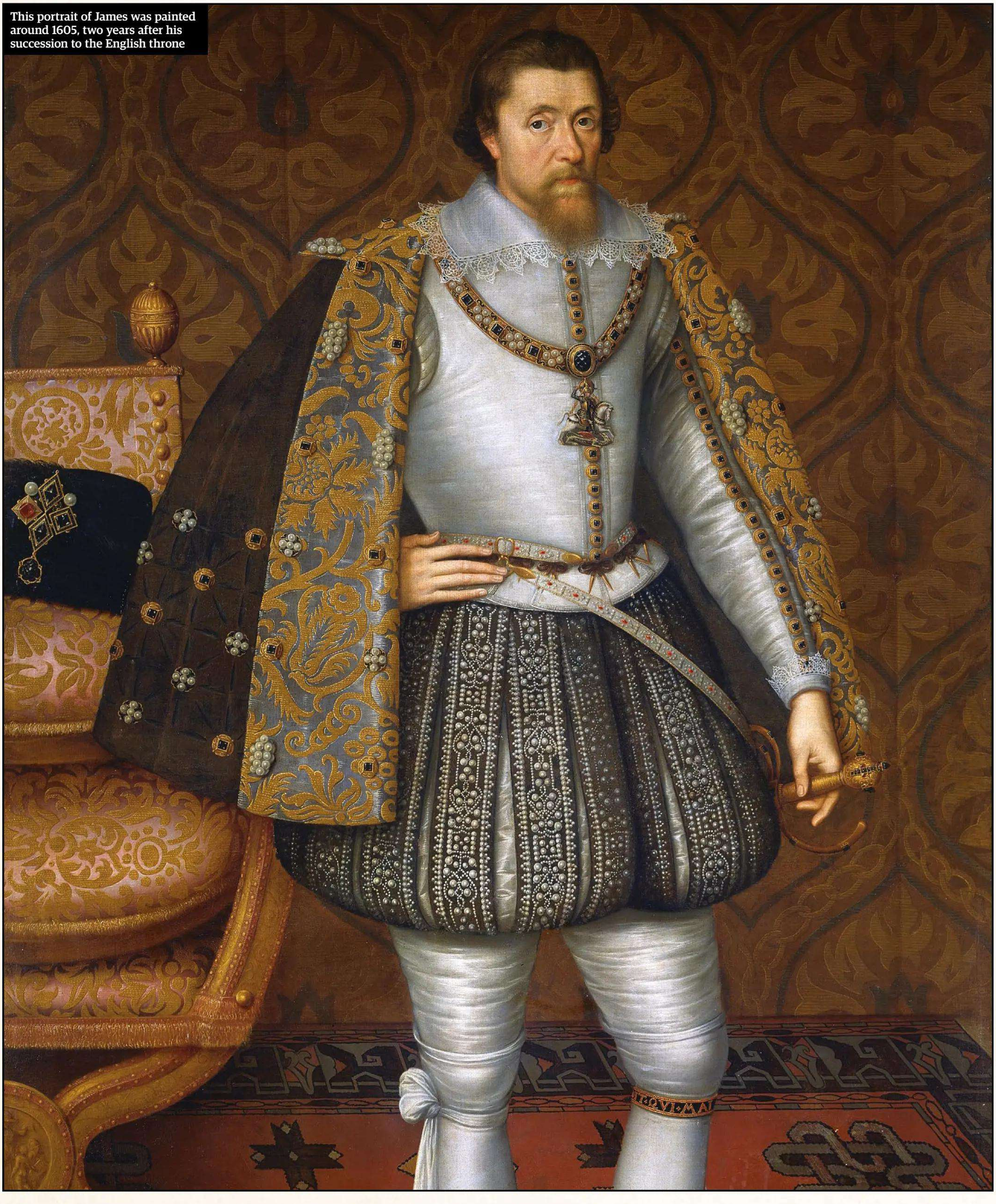
Elizabeth's emotional last stand for her country

Elizabeth's 'Golden Speech' has gone down in history as one of the most famous she ever delivered, along with her iconic speech to the troops at Tilbury. With the monopoly crisis growing and the members of parliament angrily demanding reform, the queen decided it was time to face them in person - for what she knew would be the last time.

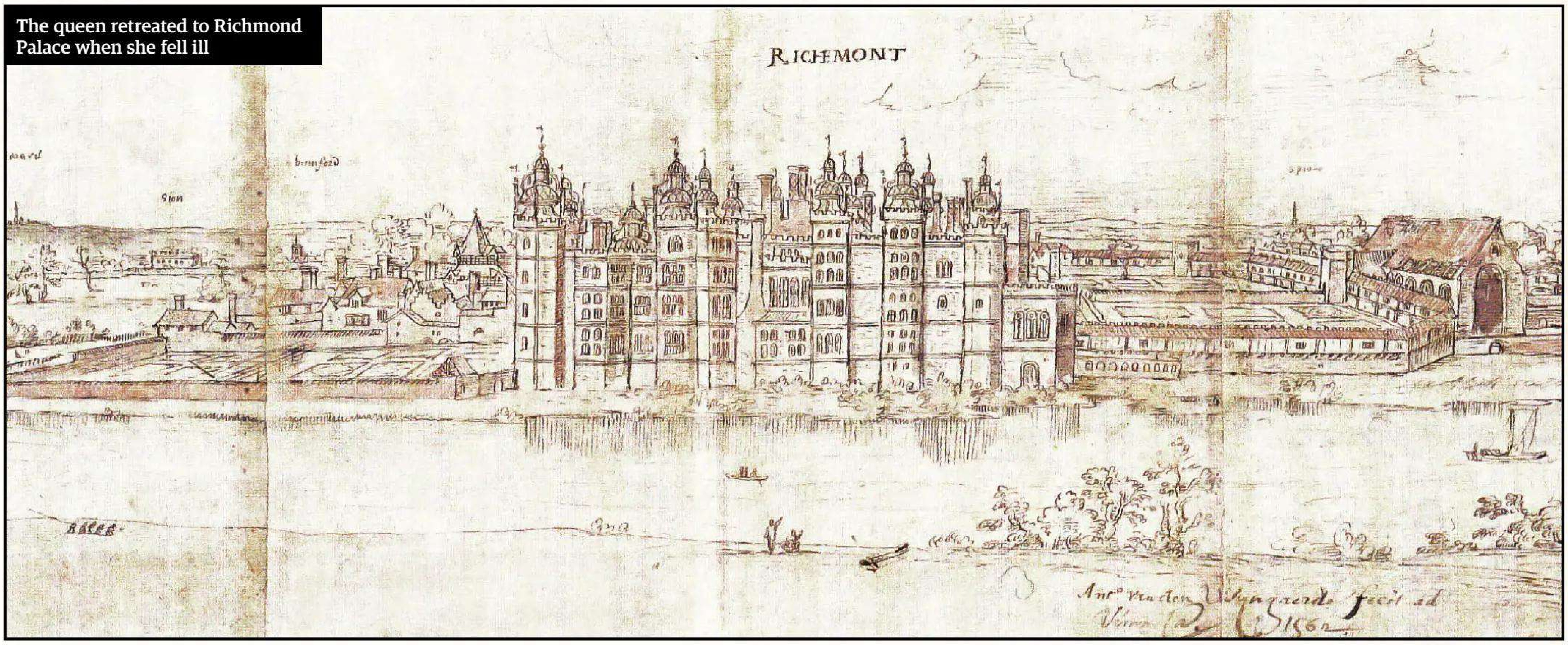
On 30 November 1601, Elizabeth entered Whitehall and addressed all 141 members of parliament. Along with her promise to end the practice of monopolies, the queen also spoke of her devotion to England: "And though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had, nor shall have, any that will love you better."

Her moving speech did turn out to be Elizabeth's last to parliament, and it surprised many of the members who did not anticipate such a touching moment from their queen. Her love and respect for them, detailed in her speech, helped to dissolve tension surrounding the monopoly issue and wider economic concerns. For many, the 'Golden Speech' is seen as a symbolic end to her reign, with the queen passing away less than two years later.


Queen Elizabeth proved to be a skilled orator during her reign



This portrait of James was painted around 1605, two years after his succession to the English throne


RICHMONT
Sion
Ant° van den Wyngaerde fecit ad vivum 1562

The queen retreated to Richmond Palace when she fell ill

queen's favour, and Essex's charming and flirtatious nature had won her over – with Essex secretly in communication with James himself. Nonetheless, Essex's unruly behaviour and disastrous rebellion eventually led to his downfall and execution in February 1601.

The death of Essex broke the queen's heart, even though his actions had forced the consequences. However, with Essex gone, he had finally been removed as an obstacle to Cecil's ambitions. He was soon able to start his own secret correspondence with King James, with their letters written in code – as Cecil's actions could cost him not only his career, but his life.

Cecil sent James advice on the best ways to flatter the queen and earn her favour, in the hope that she would relent and name him as her heir. James himself had spent years trying to get Elizabeth to accept him to no avail. One famous example of this is when the queen was facing down the incoming Spanish Armada, and James promised his support to her in a letter in which he referred to himself as her "natural son."

Cecil's clandestine efforts were for the greater good of the kingdom, and they appeared to be working, as James agreed to seek Elizabeth's approval by building a harmonious relationship. The queen responded well and even granted James an extra £2,000 a year for his English pension, but she still did not commit to naming him as her heir.

Even though Cecil worked tirelessly to secure a peaceful succession, he never actually wanted to lose Elizabeth. As her predecessors had shown, a new monarchy always brought with it new upheaval. However, this sentiment was not shared by everyone at the English court, who looked forward to a fresh start for both the monarchy and the country.

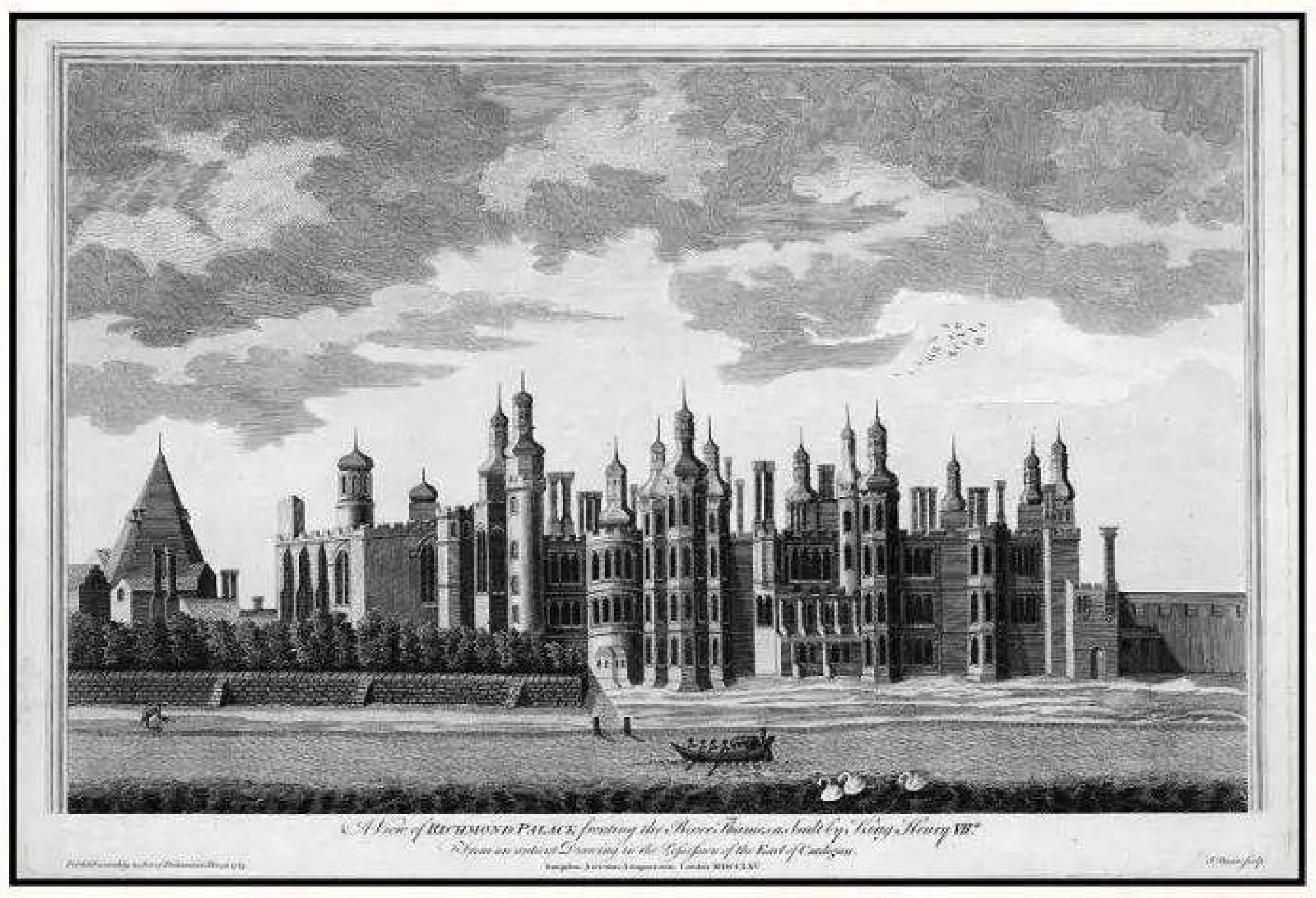
Throughout her reign, the queen had cultivated an image for herself as an eternally youthful, beautiful and powerful woman. Even as she aged, Elizabeth was determined to maintain this façade and keep to the traditional status quo of her court. But there was a new generation of courtiers and members of the public who saw her as a traditionalist, standing in the way of change.

> *"Hoping to avoid the inevitable, she stood for hours on end and refused to go to bed, ignoring Cecil's protestations"*

As glorious as Elizabeth's reign had been, now there were many who were becoming disillusioned with her. In her later years the economy suffered as a result of poor harvests and the unsuccessful war against Ireland, which had wasted a lot of money. To top it all off, growing unrest in regard to monopolies had reached boiling point.

The queen had abused the monopoly system for a long time, granting them to her favourite courtiers which caused prices to rise, while she also made financial gains from them. It led to one of the biggest crises to hit during the last few years of her reign, but luckily for the queen, she won parliament over with an impassioned speech about her love for her country.

The situation in England rallied once again as the harvests improved and a truce was reached with Ireland. Elizabeth herself seemed to gain a new lease of life, experiencing good health for the first time in years. Although England was not at the height of its glory, it was at least heading in a positive direction. Then, all of a sudden, the queen's health began to quickly deteriorate.



On top of her ill health, Elizabeth had also fallen into a deep bout of depression. It had slowly set in over the years, as the queen had witnessed the deaths of many of her long-standing supporters and friends, such as Robert Dudley, Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir William Cecil, Robert Cecil's father. William's death particularly affected the queen, so much so that she even fed him herself in the fruitless hope that he would get better.

Elizabeth's vibrant and charismatic personality, which had charmed all of those around her, dissipated completely. By 1603, she was suffering with a fever and throat ulcers, which made it increasingly painful for her to eat properly. Her sudden illness came as a shock to many because it had arrived so quickly – but Elizabeth knew that death awaited her. The queen moved to Richmond Palace to cope with her illness. Perhaps hoping to avoid the inevitable, she stood for hours on end and refused to go to bed, ignoring Cecil's protestations. She eventually chose to lie on some cushions on the floor but remained adamant that she would not go to bed – and that she would not write a will nor name an heir.

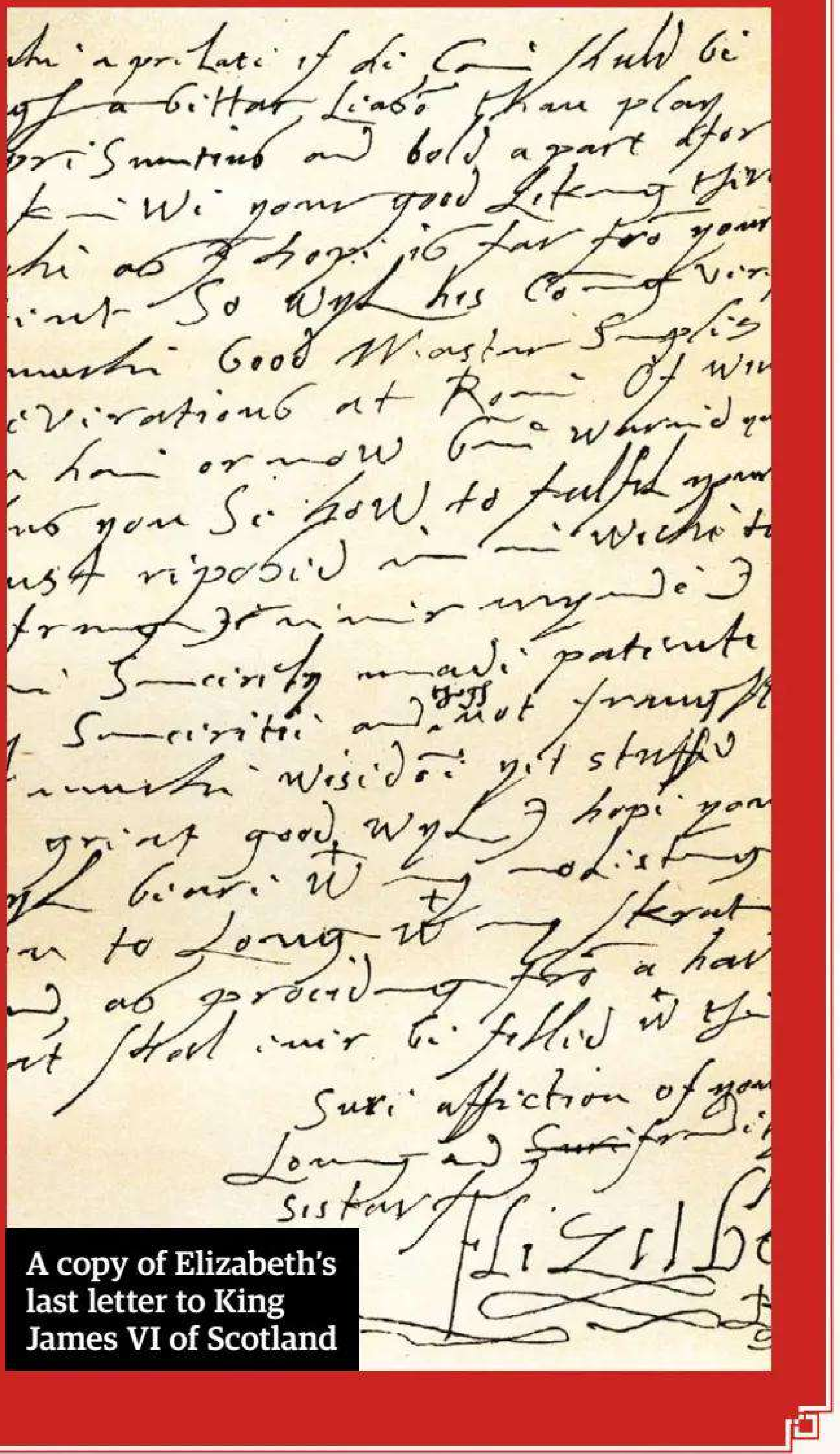
Elizabeth's last letter

Elizabeth remained stubborn even in her final correspondence

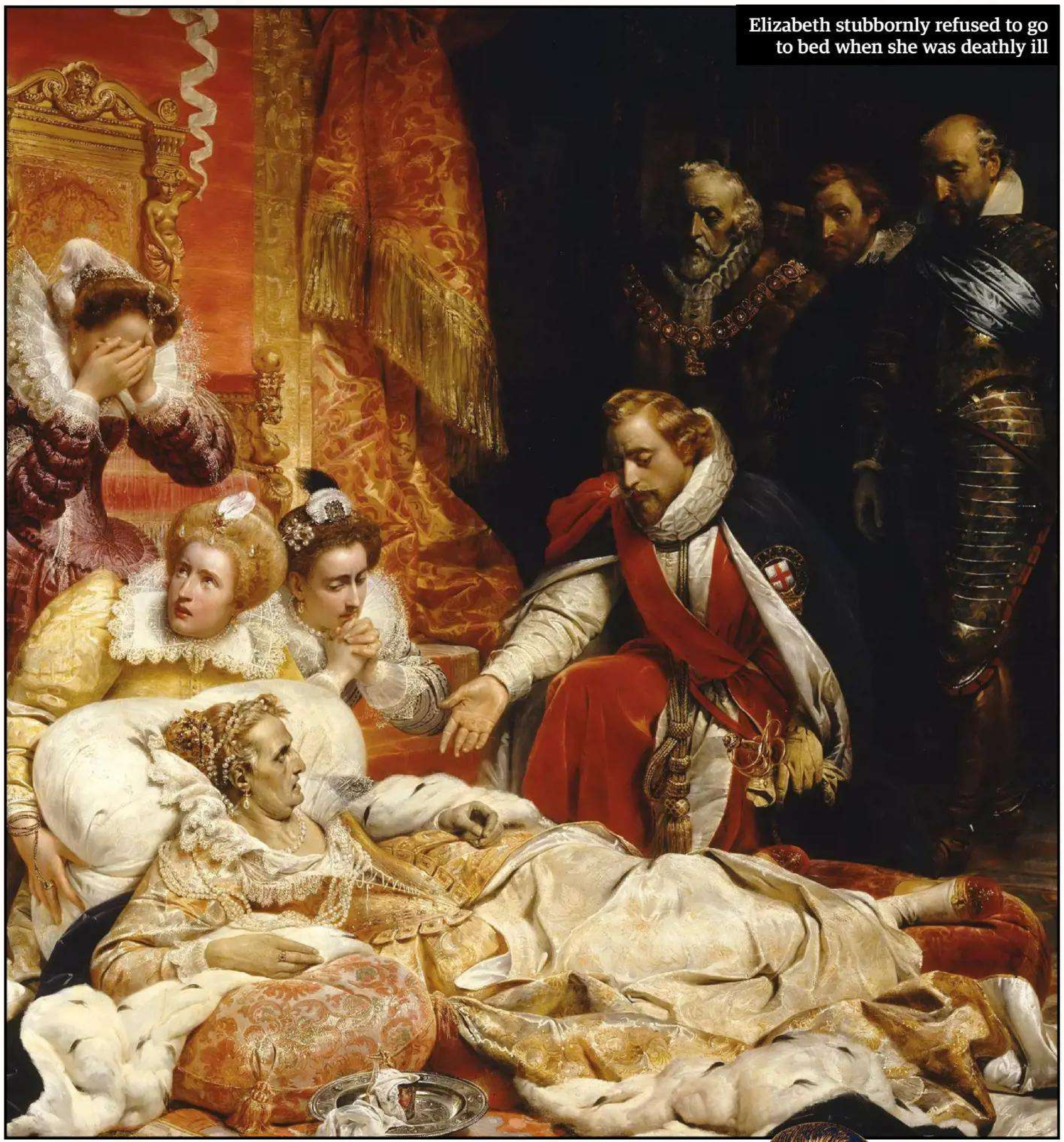
It was around 1585 when Elizabeth started to communicate with James directly, instead of using their ambassadors. Although this correspondence remained irregular, it did continue for the rest of the queen's life, with James hoping to secure confirmation from her that he was going to be named her heir.

Their letters were rather affectionate, with Elizabeth often addressing James as "my good brother." Her very last letter to James is dated 5 January 1603, just two months before her death. In it, she justifies her actions against Spain, perhaps hoping that James will understand her reasons and continue her foreign policy after her death.

However, the most interesting aspect of the letter is not what it contains, but what it is missing. By this point, Elizabeth's health is clearly declining, and it is obvious that she is nearing death's door. Despite this, she still does not acknowledge James as her heir, even though they both know that he will be the one to succeed her on the throne after she passes away. The letter itself is carefully balanced in this respect, as the queen appears fond of James while still denying him the official role as her heir.



A copy of Elizabeth's last letter to King James VI of Scotland

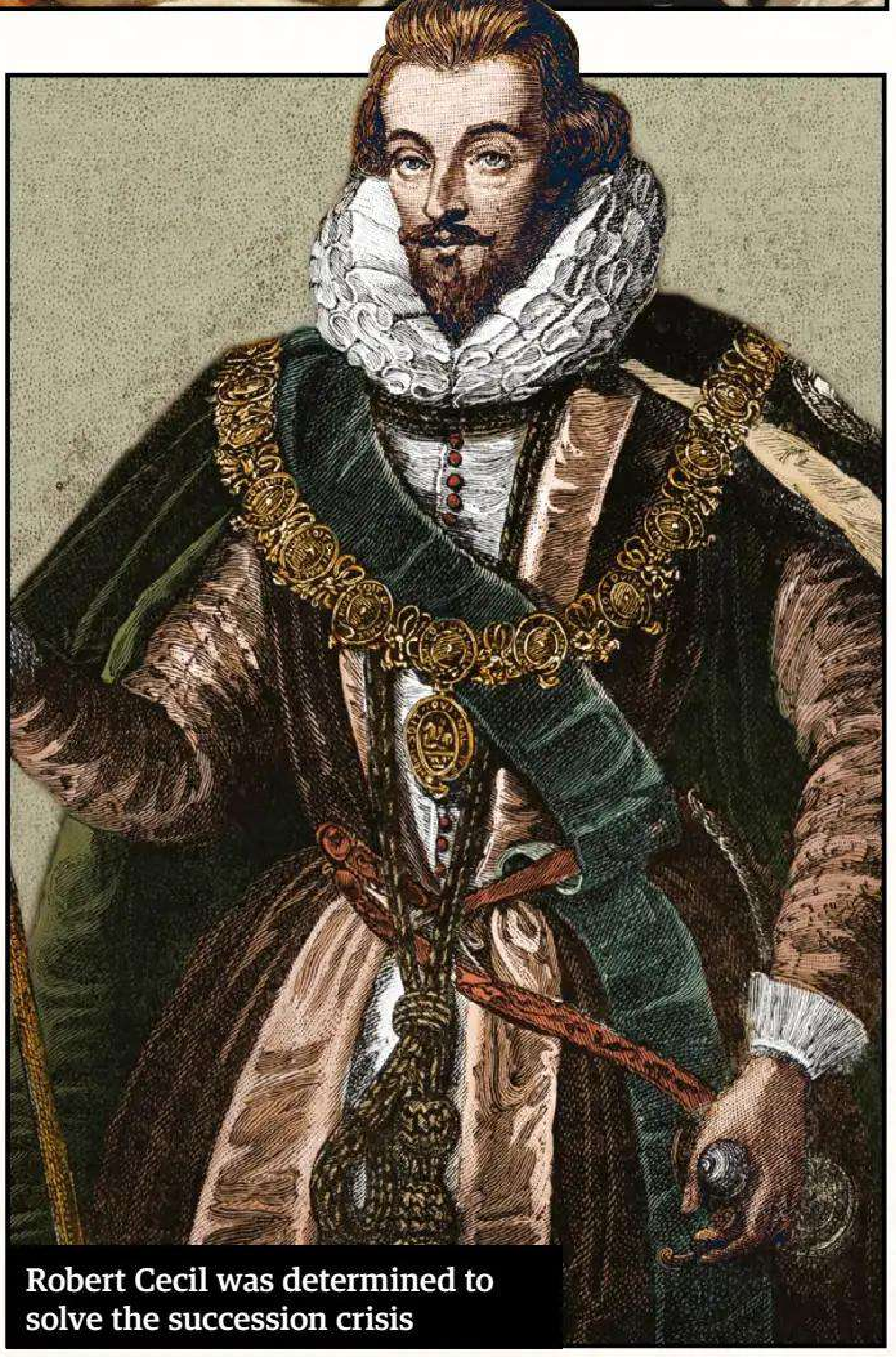


Elizabeth stubbornly refused to go to bed when she was deathly ill

An exasperated Cecil once again decided to take matters into his own hands. Realising that Elizabeth's days were dangerously numbered, he chose to send James a draft proclamation for his accession to the throne. At the same time, the queen's cousin, Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth lurked outside the palace, waiting for news of her death. His plan was to rush to Edinburgh as soon as she had passed away to tell James, hoping that he would gain favour with the new king as a result.

On 23 March, Elizabeth really was at death's door and her councillors were forced to pluck up the courage to ask her definitively whether she wished James to succeed her. Unable to speak, the queen lifted her hand and drew a circle around her head, to represent a crown, thereby finally confirming that James was her heir to the throne.

Soon afterwards, Queen Elizabeth fell into a coma. She never woke up, finally succumbing to her illness in the early hours of 24 March 1603, aged 69 years old. In the dead of night, Elizabeth's body was transported via the Thames from Richmond Palace to Whitehall, where she lay in state until her funeral. Meanwhile, Monmouth raced north to Edinburgh to inform James that he was now the king of England.



Robert Cecil was determined to solve the succession crisis

Elizabeth's tomb effigy at Westminster Palace

"Although her popularity had waned in her final years, the queen remained devoted to her country"

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Just over a month after her death, the queen's funeral was held at Westminster Abbey on 28 April. Her coffin was draped in purple cloth and was carried by a hearse through the London streets, pulled by horses covered with black velvet. It was said that the painted wooden effigy on her coffin was so lifelike that when her body passed her weeping subjects, they gasped in shock. Many wept: Elizabeth was the only ruler they had ever known.

Meanwhile, James had left Edinburgh just under two weeks after Elizabeth's death, and he did not reach London until 7 May. He was welcomed by his new subjects, most of whom were relieved that the succession was peaceful and smooth. Courtiers immediately converged on their new king, hoping to secure his favour.

Robert Cecil's clandestine letters to James and his efforts to sort out the succession had paid off, as he remained as the king's right-hand man for the first nine years of his reign, until Cecil's death in 1612. As for Monmouth, James had initially made him a gentleman of the bedchamber for informing him of the queen's death. However, he faced significant backlash at court for rushing off so quickly, as many felt his actions lacked the respect and decency owed to Elizabeth. The situation led to James dropping Monmouth from his new post.

The accession of King James ushered in a new royal dynasty for the English monarchy, the Stuarts. The Stuarts had ruled Scotland since 1371, over a century before the Tudor dynasty was founded in England by King Henry VII in 1485. They were descended from the Anglo-Norman aristocracy established after the Norman Conquest. The crowns of Scotland and England became personally unified under James, which paved the way for the Acts of Union in 1707 and the creation of Great Britain. The Stuarts would rule over England for over a century, until the death of a childless Queen Anne in 1714.

Originally buried in the vault of her grandfather at Westminster Abbey, in 1606 Elizabeth's body was moved and she now lies on top of her half-sister, Queen Mary I. The death of Elizabeth closed a glorious, if at times turbulent, chapter in England's history. Although her popularity had waned in her final years, the queen remained devoted to her country – and remains today as one of Britain's best-loved monarchs.

THE WISEST FOOL

60 King James at a Glance
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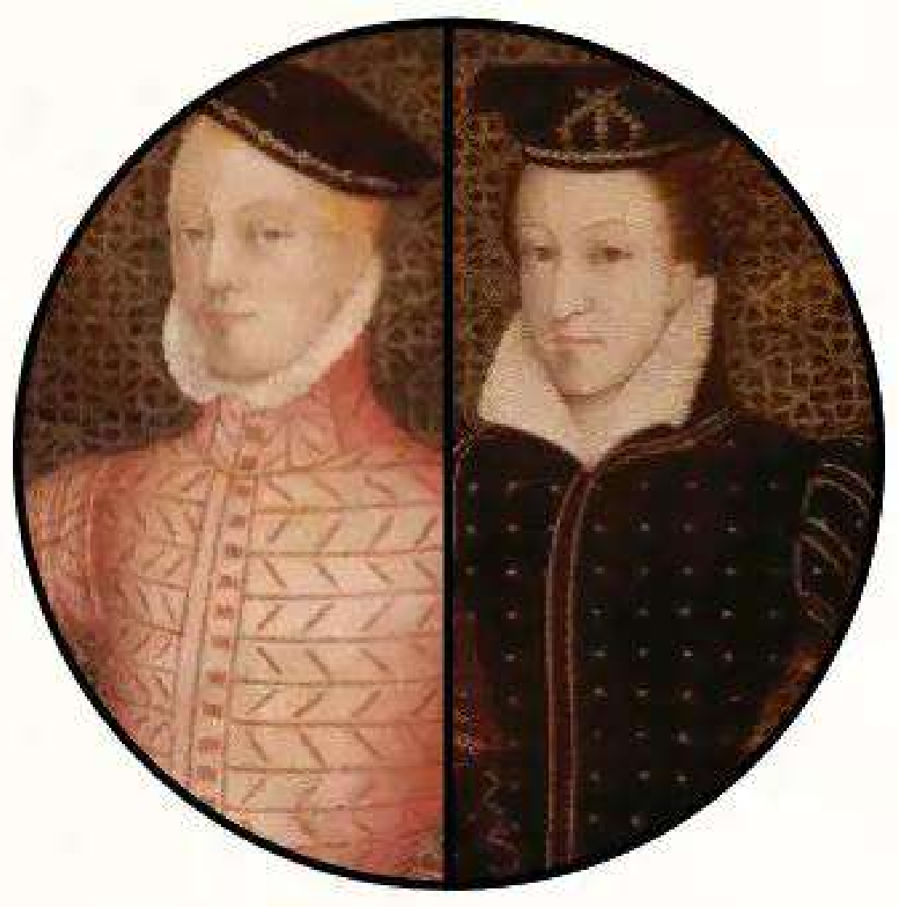
Image Sources ✱ Adobe Firefly

KING JAMES AT A GLANCE

The first Stuart king of England, James I was loved but renowned for his poor decision-making skills

Timeline

1566



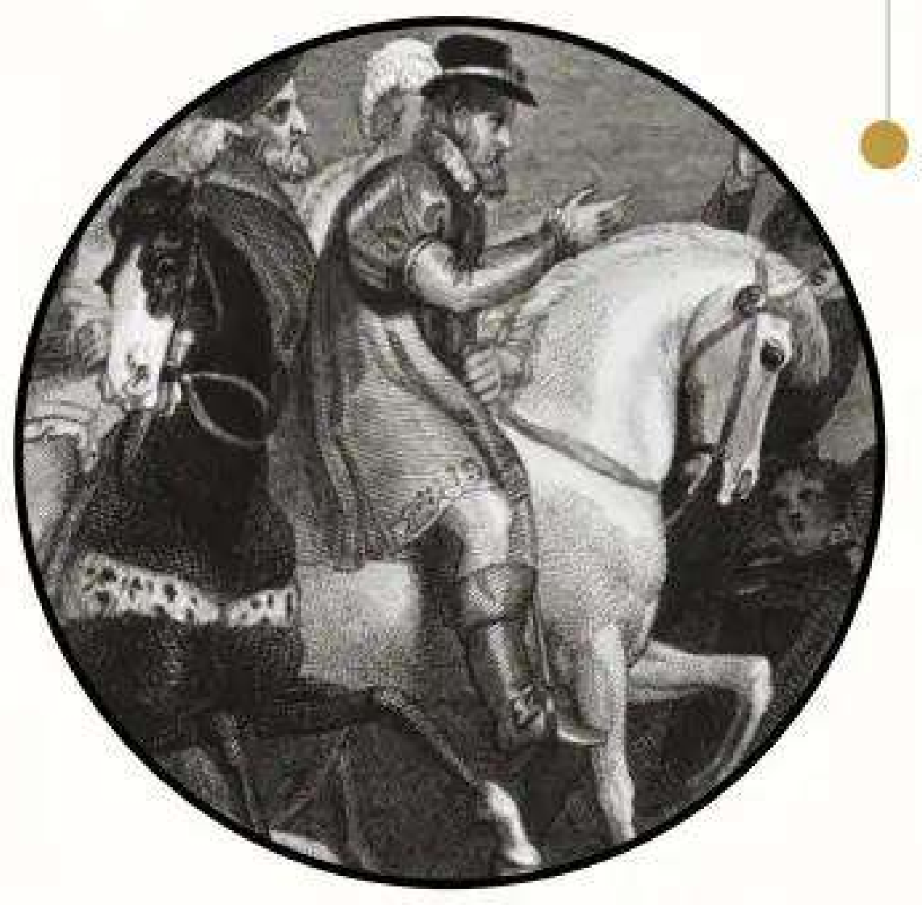
James is born
James is born at Edinburgh Castle to Mary, Queen of Scots and her second husband Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley.
19 June 1566

James VI of Scotland
James' mother Mary, Queen of Scots is forced to abdicate and flee south by the Scottish nobility after the suspicious death of her husband. Her son is crowned King James VI at the age of one. He is taken into the care of powerful Protestants to ensure he does not follow his mother's Catholic beliefs.
27 July 1567

Mary, Queen of Scots executed
James' mother Mary is executed by Elizabeth I for treason. James raises only a token complaint.
8 February 1587

Anne of Denmark
James marries the Protestant Anne of Denmark. The couple go on to have seven children, although they did drift apart.
August 1589

The True Law of Free Monarchies
James pens a political treatise on the divine right of kings, eloquently arguing that a monarch is above the law and answerable only to God.
1598

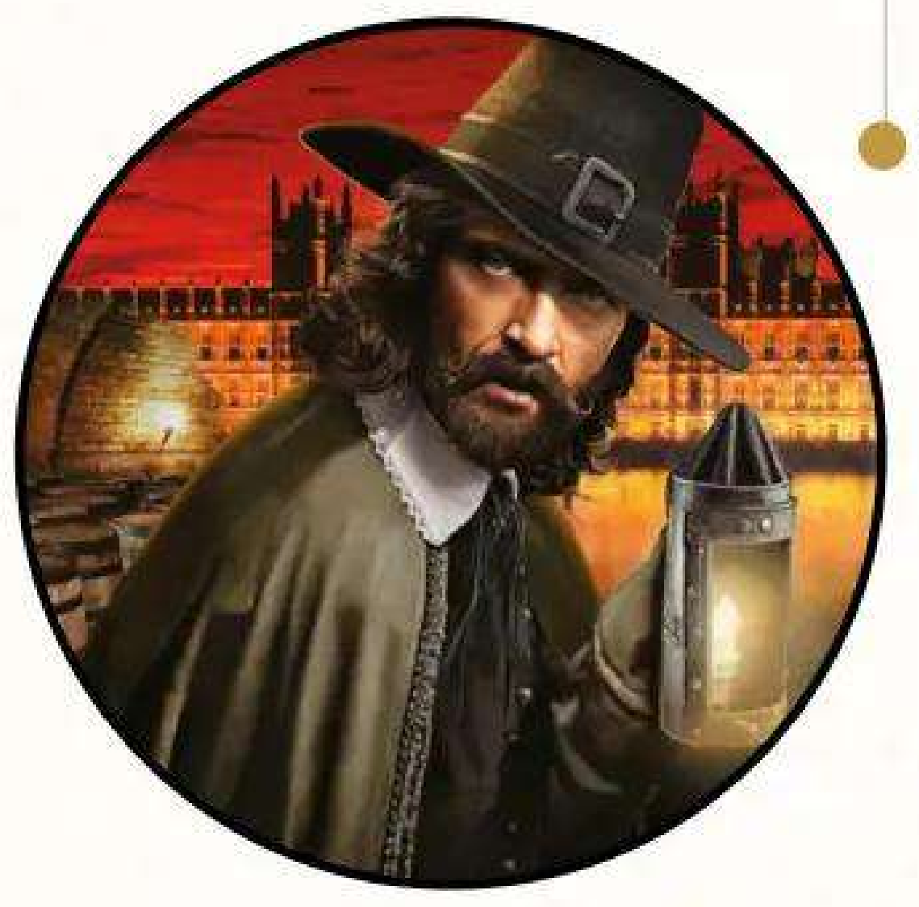


James I of England
Queen Elizabeth I dies after ruling for almost 45 years. Having refused to name an heir, her Scottish cousin is the most viable claimant and becomes James I of England at the age of 37. He brings years of experience as a competent ruler and a reputation as a scholar.
24 March 1603

Hampton Court conference
After being presented with the Millenary Petition by members of the clergy seeking reforms, James holds an ecclesiastical conference to debate the state of the church. James uses the three-day event to air his oratory skills and establish a religious settlement. He accepts only modest religious reforms.
14-16 January 1604

King of Great Britain
James I pushes for an official union of Scotland and England. The English Parliament grudgingly agrees to establish a commission to look into union with Scotland, while the Scottish oppose, fearing they will be marginalised. James declares himself 'King of Great Britain' in defiance of Parliament's rejection of the title.
20 October 1604

Treaty of London
Years of war with Spain come to an end. James intends to secure an era of peace by acting as a mediator. He gains the nickname 'Rex Pacificus' – the peaceful king.
August 1604

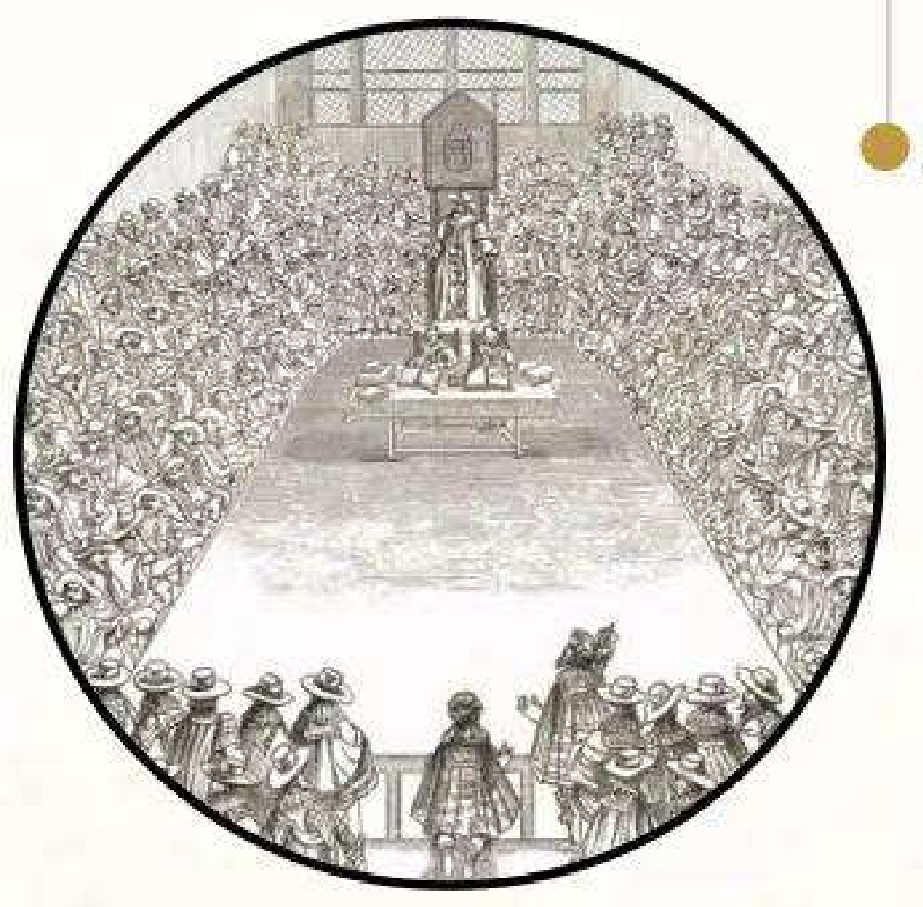


The Gunpowder Plot
A plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament by a group of Catholics is uncovered. Guy Fawkes is discovered near Parliament in a chamber full of gunpowder after one of the conspirators sent anonymous notes to Catholic lords warning them to stay away, leading to a man-hunt. The conspirators are executed.
5 November 1605

Bate's Case ruling
A legal case against a merchant ends in the judge ruling that it is a royal prerogative to levy impositions on trade without parliamentary approval. The ruling is resented by Parliament, whose only influence over the monarch is through control of royal finances.
November 1606

Union rejected
The commission into union with Scotland makes moderate proposals but almost all of them are rejected by Parliament.
1607

Colony in America
England's first permanent colony in the Americas is established. It is named Jamestown in the king's honour.
September 1607



James dissolves Parliament
Parliament discusses the 'Great Contract', whereby Parliament would grant a new source of revenue to the king and a sum to pay off the royal debts. In return James would abandon unpopular royal rights, but amid mutual recriminations Parliament is dissolved.
October 1610

James I Bible
As a result of the Hampton Court conference the Bible is translated into English, and the 'King James Bible' is distributed.
May 1611

Elizabeth marries Frederick
James marries his daughter Elizabeth to Frederick, the Protestant Elector of the Palatinate, as part of a wider strategy to mediate conflict in Europe.
May 1612

The Addled Parliament
With royal debt worsening, James calls Parliament for the first time in four years. In a distrustful atmosphere nothing is achieved and James angrily dissolves Parliament again.
April 1614

Thirty Years' War and Parliament recalled
Parliament is recalled to discuss subsidies to intervene militarily in Europe, after Frederick II becomes involved in the Thirty Years' War when he accepts the Bohemian crown against the Austrian Habsburgs' wishes and is defeated in battle. The imbalance between Protestant and Catholic power plunges Europe deeper into war.
January 1621

Charles goes to Spain
Charles, James' heir, travels to Madrid with the king's favourite, George Villiers, in a clumsy bid to woo the Spanish infanta Maria Ana and form an alliance with Catholic Spain. James hopes an alliance can strengthen his position as a mediator. Negotiations fail, and Charles returns demanding war with Spain.
March 1623

1625

James dies
James dies at the age of 58, having ruled Scotland for 57 years and England for 22. His son Charles inherits both crowns, a huge royal debt and a fractious political situation that needs a highly skilled political operator to control.
27 March 1625

James wrote a treatise on smoking called *Counterblast to Tobacco*. He described the habit as "a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs"

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1603–1625

JAMES I

James I, King of England and Scotland, struggled throughout his reign to create a united and prosperous realm of Great Britain under a Stuart dynasty

It was widely hoped by English courtiers that King James VI of Scotland represented a safe pair of hands for the English monarchy in 1603. Elizabeth I had died after nearly 45 years on the throne and had left no clues as to who should succeed her. As far as the English court was concerned James was the natural choice even if he was the son of that notorious Catholic, Mary Queen of Scots. Unlike his mother, he was a Protestant. He had also reigned in Scotland successfully for 36 years. Secret meetings between James and members of Elizabeth's inner circle had been conducted to see if he would be interested in the job; as far as the English were concerned, his credentials were excellent.

James' disruptive and unstable childhood had forced him to become adaptable in dangerous situations, something that served him well when he became King of England. His mother had been forced to abdicate the Scottish throne in 1567 by a Protestant uprising, after which he was placed in the charge of her enemies to be raised as a Protestant. Not long into his adult reign as King of Scotland, he was kidnapped by a group of nobles and was compelled to rule through their influence for a year. These were dangerous times for James; he had been little more than a child and at the mercy of men who wanted nothing more than to claim the power behind the throne for themselves.

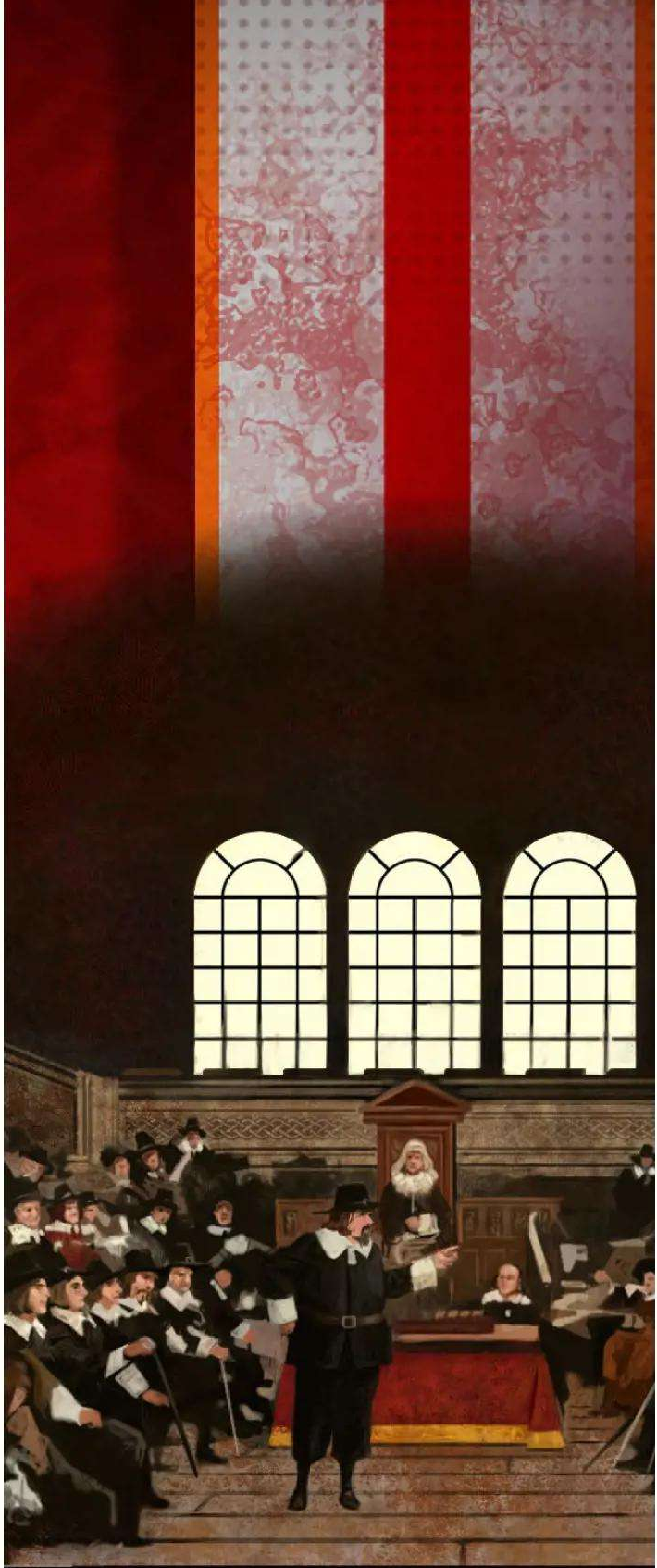
> After the events of the Gunpowder Plot, James became paranoid, and would, in public, wear a padded doublet as a type of armour

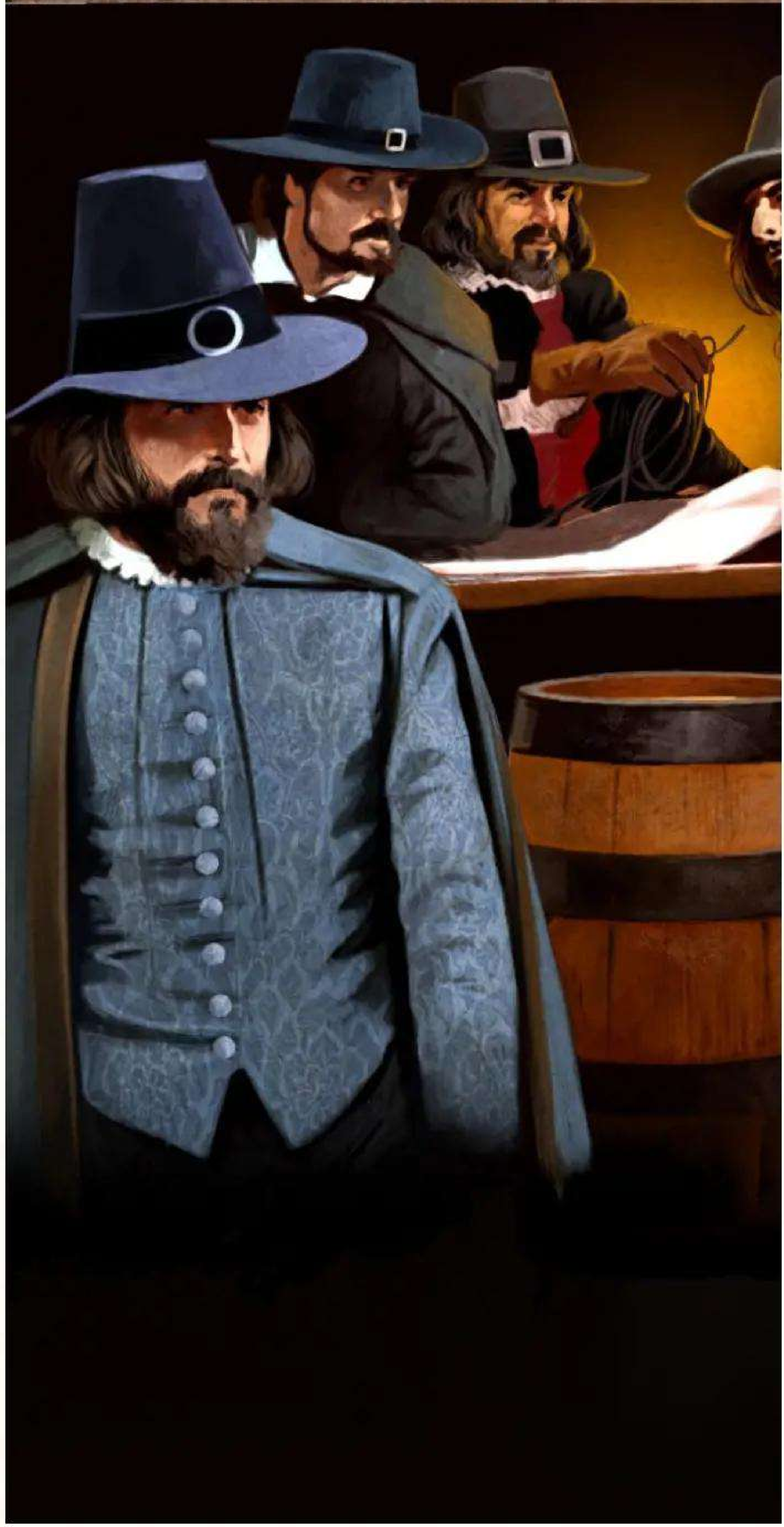
It was an unforgiving and impoverished life, his strict Protestant teachings made for a bland existence that consisted of rules and punishments. The sober education James received in his early years along with the impoverishment of the Scottish crown meant that when he journeyed south in 1603 he was astonished at the comparative abundance of the English realm. He quickly took to enjoying his new-found wealth by lavishing English gifts on his Scottish courtiers controversially from the English treasury.

His court became one of the most extravagant and audacious institutions in England, James did not care for studying documents or enacting laws. He'd rather go hunting, hawking or hosting his infamously drunken banquets. He was a man enjoying his new-found freedom away from the cold monotony of ruling Scotland and he did not want to make a new prison for himself by trying too hard to rule England. He left it up to his courtiers to do the day-to-day business, namely an old trusted advisor, Robert Cecil, who died nine years later from exhaustion.

While James' new-found extravagance irritated those who paid the bills, it was instead his religious beliefs that caused the most controversy.

On 5 November 1605, a group of conspirators connected to the Catholic Jesuit community in England acted on a plot to assassinate James by attempting to blow up Parliament. The conspirators were appalled at James' overtly Protestant beliefs, so they decided to kill him in order to install his nine-year-old daughter Elizabeth as Queen in the hopes that she would become a pro-Catholic monarch. The plan on the face of it made sense: rather than just kill James they planned to kill his entire Protestant party at the opening of Parliament and thus create enough chaos for a pro-Catholic monarch to be installed in its wake. James was not in the Parliament building when a suspicious attendant





James was the first monarch who argued for a union between England and Scotland. It was rejected by both countries

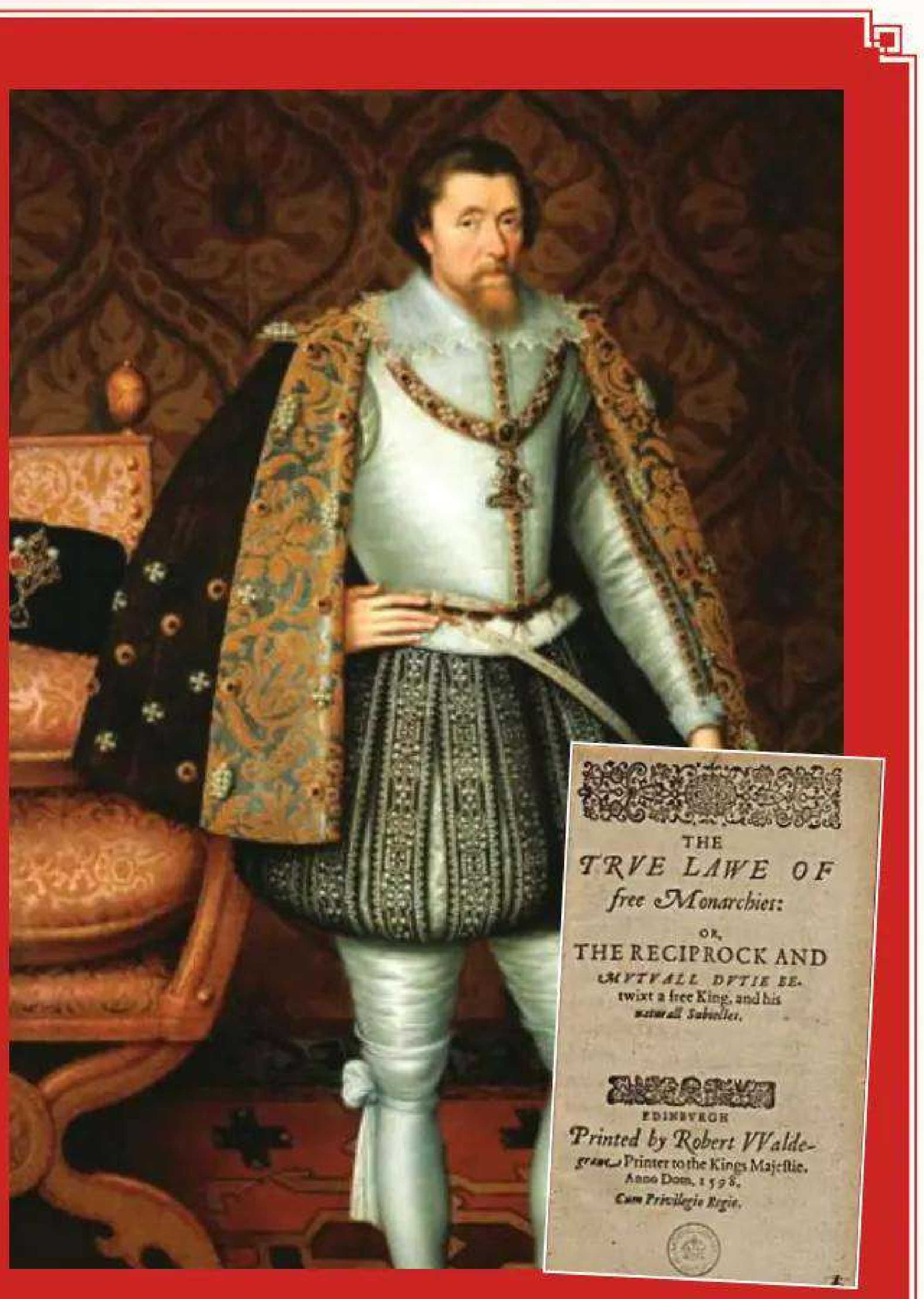
JAMES I

British, 1566-1625

Brief Bio

Ascending to the throne of Scotland in 1567, James became the king of a unified Scottish and English kingdom after the death of his cousin, Elizabeth I. He struggled to continue her legacy and became increasingly unpopular with his Catholic subjects in particular, who made an attempt on his life in 1605.

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Joe Cummings



THE
TRVE LAWE OF
free Monarchies:
OR,
THE RECIPROCK AND
MVTVALL DVTIE BE-
twixt a free King, and his
naturall Subiectes.

EDINBVRGH
Printed by Robert VValde-
graue, Printer to the Kings Majestie.
Anno Dom. 1598.
Cum Privilegio Regis.

The Last King of Scotland

James was the last Scottish monarch to rule a fully independent Scotland without governing by proxy from other kingdoms. A Scottish King needed to be strong-willed and able to adapt quickly especially when dealing with the touchy and volatile clan system. James proved himself to be an able negotiator and a strong leader in this regard; he stopped the country tearing itself apart with religious violence and gained universal respect from the numerous clan-based factions within the Scottish court. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the book he authored called The True Law of Free Monarchies. In it he outlined a theory of absolute monarchy by which the King, granted his prerogative powers from God, could create laws and enact commands without consulting privy counsellors or Parliaments. This was a radical and explosive idea in the British Isles, where the power of Parliament governing in partnership with the monarchy was a long-respected institution. In Scotland the Parliamentary system was easier to manage because it was smaller and relied on business being conducted personally with the King. When James journeyed south to claim his English throne he quickly found that the English Parliament was not only far larger but also more vocal in its criticism of the monarch.

discovered Guy Fawkes guarding barrels of gunpowder in the cellars.

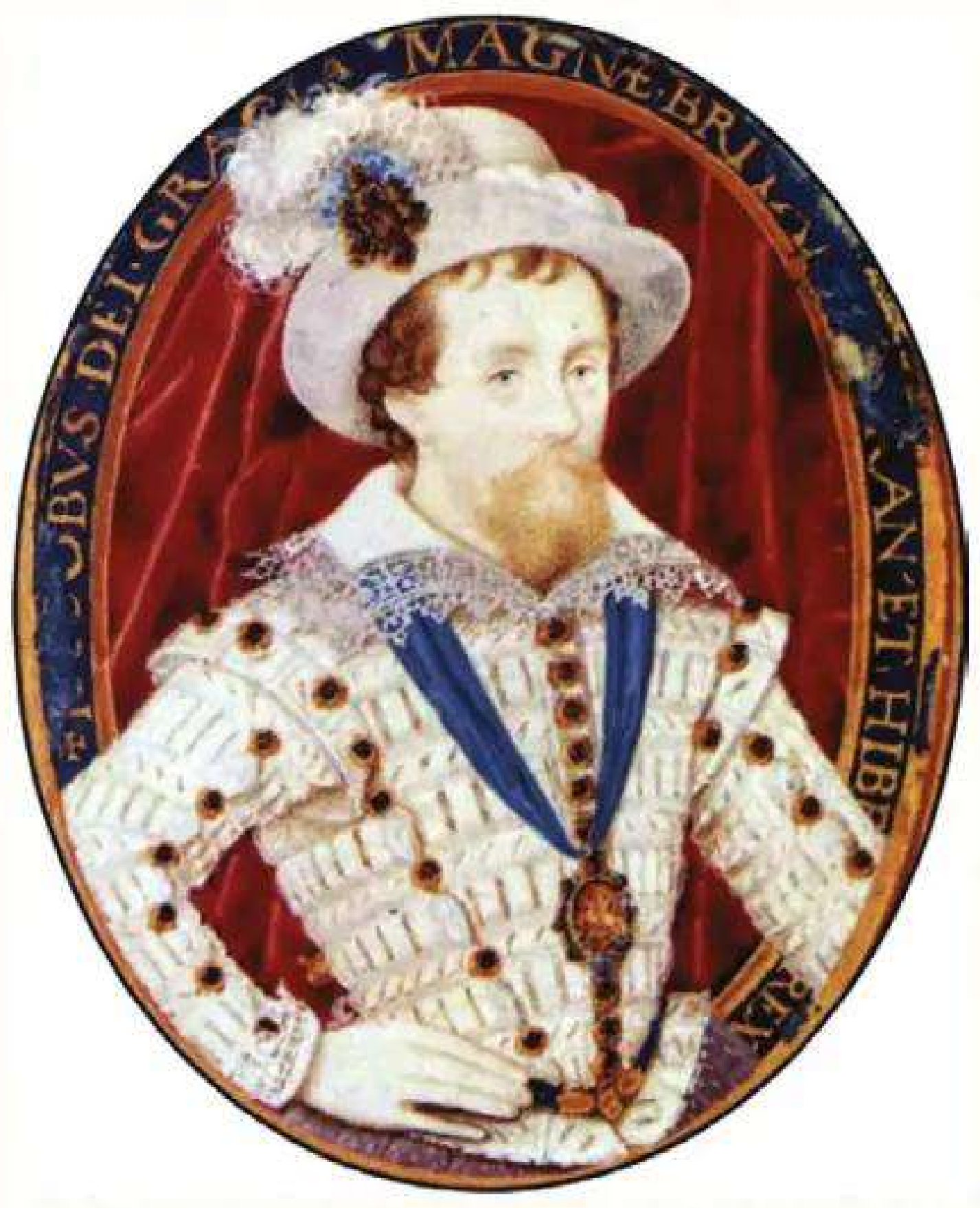
When news of the conspiracy reached James, he acted decisively. He was no stranger to intrigue of this kind and knew what had to be done. He ordered Fawkes to be interrogated using the 'gentler tortures' which included racking, where Fawkes was tied to a device and stretched until his bones were forced out of their sockets. In keeping with his style of dealing with matters on a personal level, he journeyed down to the tower and interrogated Fawkes himself, asking him how he could conspire 'such a hideous a treason'. Fawkes replied: 'A dangerous disease required a desperate remedy.' James was appalled but he admired Fawkes' spirit, noting later that he put on a 'Roman resolution.' Eventually the King's torturers broke Fawkes: he gave up his fellow conspirators and they all suffered a traitor's death. While James had not been physically harmed during the whole affair, mentally it affected him greatly. He had always known that he'd had English enemies and now some of them had tried to kill him. From then on he didn't travel without guards, he wore an extra-thick doublet and carried a knife at all times for additional protection.

Four days after the Gunpowder Plot on 9 November, James addressed the first session of Parliament with the following preamble, "it may well be called a roaring, nay a firing sin from fire and brimstone, from the which God hath so miraculously delivered as all." The sitting MPs heartily agreed. Unfortunately for James it would be about the only thing him and his Parliament would agree on for the next 20 years. They argued incessantly over money, religion and taxation. James was furious. It was his view that a monarch be unquestioned by their subjects, that ruling was his business and not theirs. After a particularly difficult session, he commented, "I will not thank where I feel no thanks due… I am not of such a stock as to praise fools… I wish you would make use of your liberty with more modesty in times to come."

Parliament held on to its liberty and refused James' proposal for a standard lump sum of money to be given to him to run the country, known as the 'Great Contract' of 1610. The MPs felt James simply couldn't be trusted with such a lucrative proposition. James blamed the insolence of the members of the house and listened to his favourites in court who sneered at what they saw as common upstarts impoverishing the crown. In the end he refused to call another Parliament for four years, only trying again in 1614 but ending with the same unhappy results. With no Parliament, there was no money, and James could not champion the Protestant cause abroad nor could he put his mind to building his kingdom at home. Deeply resentful, he retired to his court, allowed his ministers to run the country and became increasingly distracted with his own personal life.

James suffered from weak knees and later developed crippling arthritis in his knee joints; he was seen hobbling in later years

Flight of Mary Queen of Scots
After facing a Protestant uprising from her nobles, Mary is forced to abdicate and flees south into England leaving the young James at the mercy of her enemies.
24 July 1567



Defining moment
Crowned King of England
25 July 1603

James had ruled Scotland as the sixth king of his name for 36 years when his cousin Elizabeth I died. Despite the family tension between the houses of Tudor and Stuart, he was the closest living relative of the unmarried, childless queen and became, by default, her heir. Ascending to the Scottish throne as a child, he becomes somewhat of a puppet prince for the Protestant nobles who support his rule. They ensure that he too adopts the Protestant faith, and this is a factor in his claim to the throne of England when Elizabeth dies. He becomes England's first King James at the age of 37.

Timeline

1566

Birth of James
James is born to Mary Queen of Scots on 19 June 1566. James is Mary's only son and while this secures the line of succession, his mother has become deeply unpopular in Scotland.
19 June 1566

Crowned King of Scotland
The nobles ensure that James is crowned King of Scotland while he is still in his minority so they can influence his upbringing and stop him from becoming a Catholic like his mother.
29 July 1567

Marriage to Anne of Denmark
James marries Anne of Denmark by proxy to strengthen the ties of Protestant monarchies within Europe. The couple would go on to have seven children.
August 1589

Journey south
After the death of Elizabeth I it is decided that James has the strongest claim to the throne of England and is invited south. He takes his household and courtiers with him.
5 April 1603

James' sexuality had always been a subject of court gossip, but by 1620 it was actively destroying the trust between him and his courtiers. It was widely believed by the men closest to James that patronage and influence could only be obtained if you were male and the King took an interest in you. The situation was inflamed by men like George Villiers, the Earl of Buckingham, who was rumoured to be in a sexual relationship with the King. A handsome man from minor gentry, Villiers had risen from a knight of a small county to the second most powerful man in the Kingdom thanks to James, who once commented, '[I] confess to loving those dear to me… I love the Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else… Christ had his John and I have my George.' Whether sexual in nature or not, their relationship grew over the years; James called himself George's 'sweet husband' and George was James' 'wife', among other pet names. As James' marriage to Anne of Denmark resulted in seven children, the question of whether James was openly attracted to men as well as/instead of women is still a matter of debate.

> James had an overly large tongue, which was commented on negatively at the time by certain members of the English court

The problem by 1620, at the age of 53, was that he had allowed the men he associated with to cloud his judgement. The astute negotiating skills he possessed in Scotland had abandoned him and he was now surrounded by less competent men like Villiers who gave poor advice to the aging King. It was this poor advice that made James continue to hope for a Spanish match in the closing years of his reign. A marriage between his son, Charles, and the Spanish Infanta Maria Anna would be a prestigious prize for James, so in 1623 Charles and Villiers boarded a ship bound for the Spanish mainland with James' blessing so Charles could attempt to woo the Infanta in person.

As soon as they stepped off the boat and introduced themselves to the Spanish court, they were arrested and held as 'guests'. James waited in England in anxious anticipation; a Spanish match would solve all of his financial troubles through the Infanta's dowry. When he received news that his favourite and his only son had been arrested by the Spanish court, he was furious. After some tentative negotiations, Charles and Villiers were released and returned to England with their tails between their legs. The Spanish had caused great offence in arresting Charles and now he was demanding war.

Neither James nor the country was in any state to wage a war with Spain to save Charles' honour, and with deteriorating health after a bad case of dysentery James died 27 March 1625. He passed away deeply unhappy; his dream of a united and prosperous Britain with strong foreign allies and a humble Parliament hadn't been fulfilled. He would later be known as the 'wisest fool in all of Christendom', extremely able but counselled badly. He left behind an England that had become deeply suspicious of the monarchy and its role in governing the country.

Religious intolerance

England at the time of James' reign was deeply intolerant of the Catholic minority that existed within the Kingdom. Catholicism or 'Popery' as it was more commonly referred to was seen to be in league with the devil and many of James' subjects feared a clandestine Catholic conspiracy to take over the country.

The rights of Parliament

After the end of the Tudor dynasty, Parliament had become more powerful through its ability to grant money to an increasingly impoverished monarchy. Often Parliaments granting the crown money was dependent on Parliament being bought off with new laws favourable to representatives in the chamber.

The King's court

The King's court was made up of the nobility of the realm and it acted as another organ of state that the King could use to govern the country. During James' reign the court became even more important because he used the presence of both English and Scottish courtiers to rule both his Kingdoms.

Troubles abroad

The prejudice the Protestant population had for Catholics in England was inflamed by the outright hostility experienced by Protestants from Catholic countries in Europe. England remained largely untouched by the fighting, however the influence of events abroad had a dramatic effect on religious prejudices and mental attitudes.

The New World

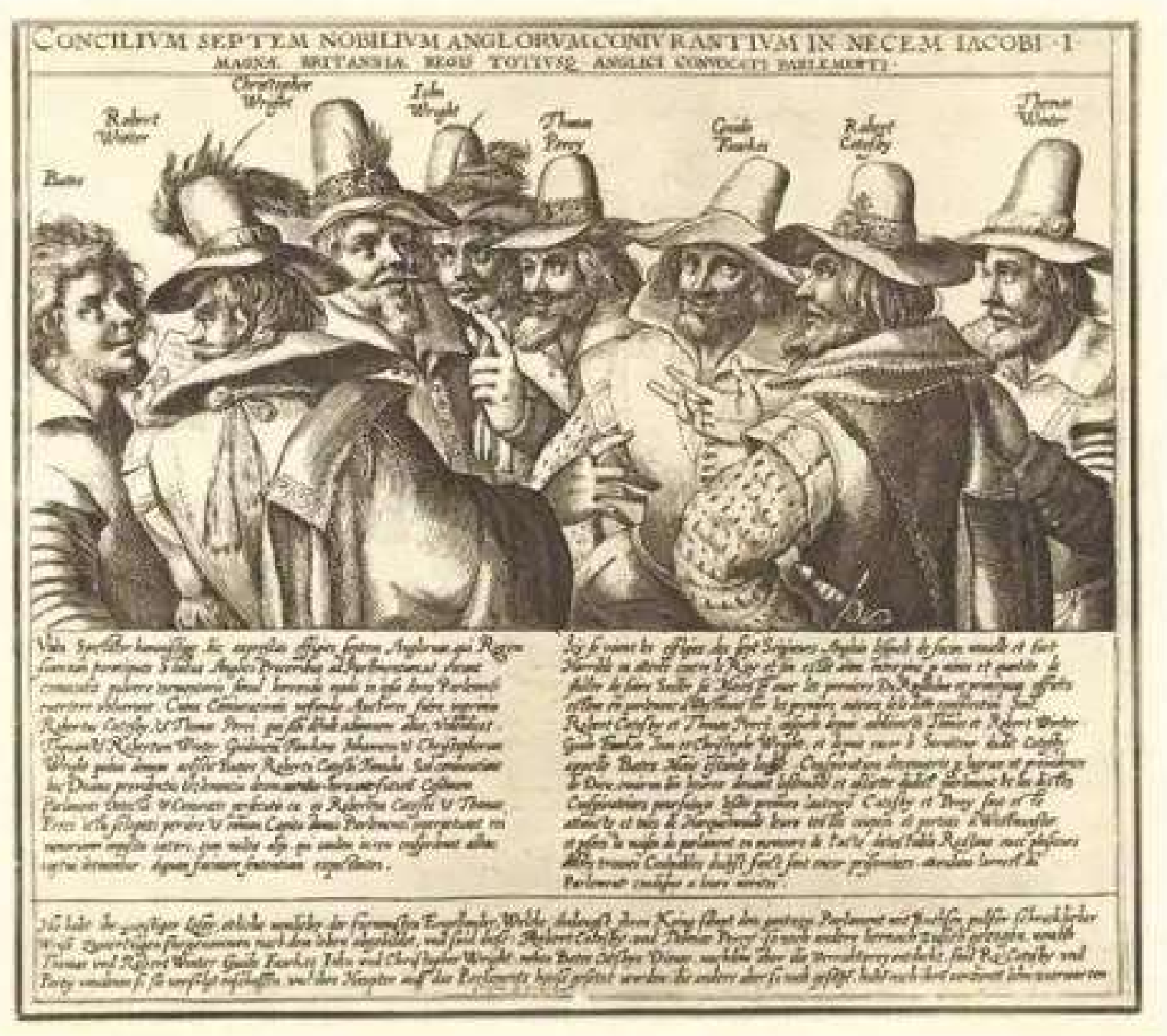
The first permanent settlements in America were established during James' reign starting with Jamestown, Virginia, founded in 1607. The allure of making a fortune in a new world free from religious persecution was an attractive prospect to many of James' subjects.

Defining moment

The Gunpowder Plot

5 November 1604

A plot to kill James while he attends the opening of Parliament is thwarted when guards search the cellars of the Parliament building and find Guy Fawkes guarding barrels of gunpowder. The plan was to ignite the gunpowder when James entered Parliament and destroy the English government. Fawkes and his fellow conspirators are all arrested, tortured and sentenced to a traitor's death. As a result of the plot, anti-Catholic violence increases throughout the country. James continues to call for religious moderation but has to allow a certain amount of anti-Catholic behaviour to stay popular with his subjects.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MAGNÆ BRITANNIÆ REGIS TOTIVSQ ANGLICI CONVOCATI PARLAMENTI
Bates
Robert Winter
Christopher Wright
John Wright
Thomas Percy
Guido Fawkes
Robert Catesby
Thomas Winter

Defining moment

The Spanish match

March 1623

James had always dreamt of an alliance between England and the most powerful country in Europe – Spain. While the difference in religion was seen to be insurmountable, England being Protestant while Spain was Catholic, James insisted on pursing a match with his son Charles and the Spanish Infanta, Maria Anna. Charles travelled to Spain but was arrested and held temporarily in custody, with his travelling companion George Villiers.

Jamestown established
The first permanent English settlement in America is established on the coast of Virginia, the settlers name it Jamestown after the King of England and battle to keep the settlement alive.
24 May 1607

The Great Contract
A plan to get the crown out of debt through Parliament giving James an annual subsidy is overturned by the members of the house because they don't trust James with the money.
February 1610

Dissolved Parliament
After wrestling with Parliament for more money to prop up his out-of-control spending, James dissolves the house and does not call another session for four years.
31 December 1610

King James Bible
The King James Bible is published by James and his bishops to bring a universal Protestant faith to the British Isles. It is still used as the basis for global Protestantism today.
January 1611

Investigation of monopolies
In an effort to break up the monopoly of businesses that are strangling commerce in London, James calls Parliament to take action but his sour relationship with the house prevents any progress.
December 1620

Death of a Stuart
James dies aged 58 after his health deteriorates. He leaves behind an uneasy and reformist England that his son Charles struggles to control.
27 March 1625

THE RISE OF KING JAMES

Taking power in a time of turmoil, King James faced plenty of challenges

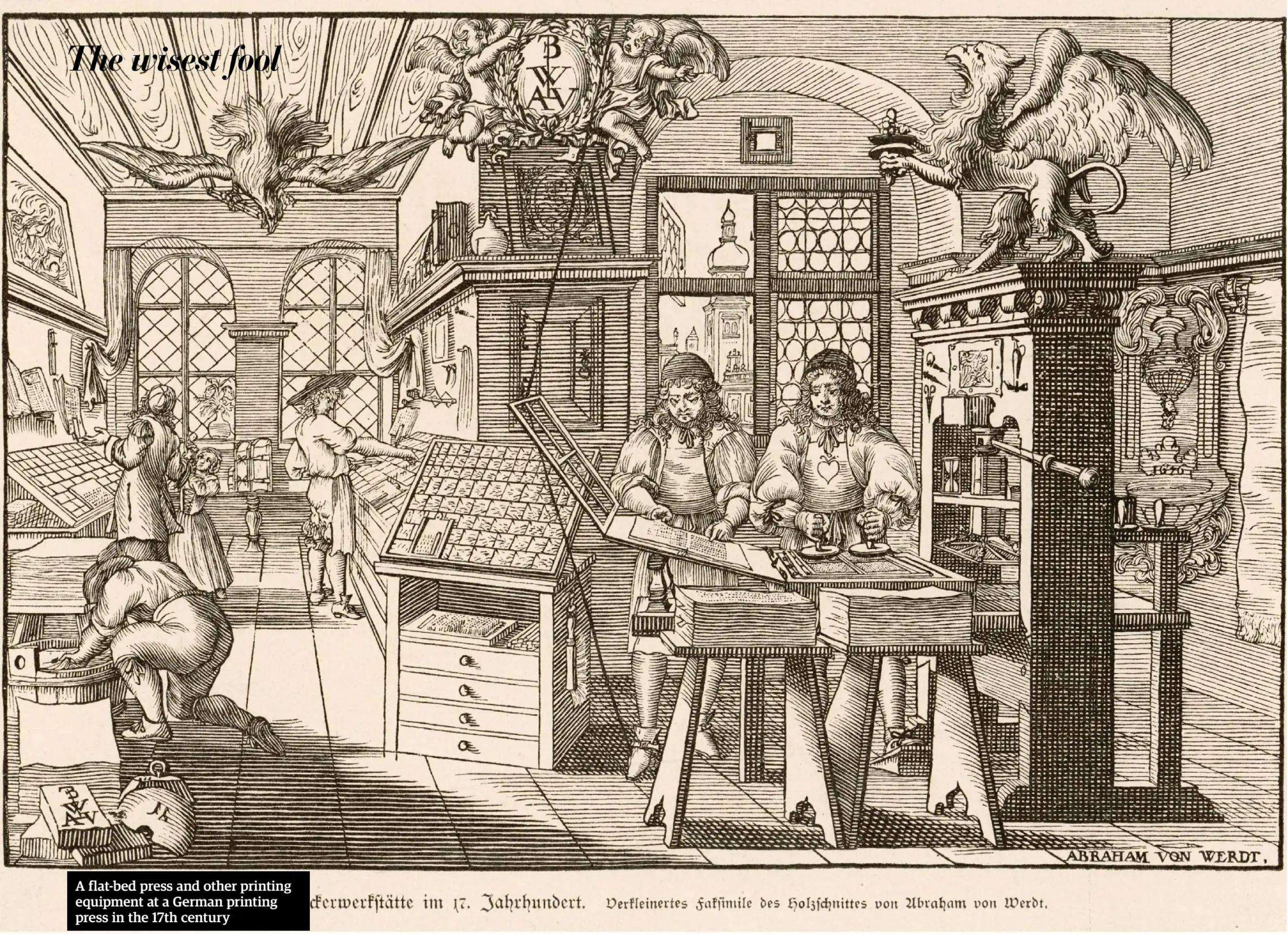
We do now with patience expect the consummation of our gracious king's coronation, after which we hope he will hearken him to our motions in behalf of the Church.' So wrote Stephen Egerton, a London clergyman, in 1603. Egerton had good personal reasons to hope for a settlement of the divisive issues that had created deep rifts in English religious life during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Although the incumbent of St Anne's Blackfriars in London, he had earlier spent three years in prison for getting too close to the Separatists, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood. He was far from being alone in the hope that the new monarch would restore religious unity to the English Church. But, of course, all parties concerned had their own interpretations of the word 'unity'. No one knew what kind of church James favoured and, for the time being, at least, he was quite content to leave everyone in the dark.

James became King of Scotland on the abdication of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1567, when he was little more than a year old. Earlier in the year his father, Lord Darnley, had been murdered. His mother was imprisoned by her enemies and subsequently fled to exile in England. Therefore, he never knew his parents and his upbringing was in the hands of regents and the tutors appointed by them to attend to his education. They were predominantly Presbyterians and the young king was soundly indoctrinated in Calvinist theology. But there was a strong Catholic faction among the Scottish nobility, and as he entered his adolescent years, James became adept at religious dialectic. Three major factors went into fashioning the psyche of the man who united in his person the rule of Scotland and England in 1603. First, he craved affection. His lack of family life caused him to develop close relationships with companions, who, thus, came to exercise considerable influence. Second, he enthusiastically studied theology, a subject in which his reading, if not deep, was certainly wide. Third, and fundamentally, he had a passionate commitment to the sacred nature of his office. The pre-Reformation Scottish Church had been run by bishops, and though the Protestant 'kirk' that replaced it replicated much of the Calvinist polity, Church-state relations were not yet fully modelled on the Presbyterian model.

The Scottish king's dominant concern was the same as that of the English queen – asserting and maintaining royal authority. Like his predecessor, he desired peace, uniformity and loyalty. If power came down from above and was vested in God's representative in both Church and state, then that power could not be challenged. The king might choose to delegate authority in certain matters to Church leaders, members of Parliament and the law courts, but these remained subordinate entities. Ministers of the kirk were in no position to dictate to the king. James made his politico-religious philosophy clear in two treatises, 'Basilikon Doron' and 'The True Law of Free Monarchies'.

After his long experience of dealing with the competing parties north of the border there was little the 37-year-old king did not know about

Image Sources ● Adobe Firefly, Getty Images, Alamy, Wikipedia


ABRAHAM VON WERDT.
ckerwerkſtätte im 17. Jahrhundert. Verkleinertes Fakſimile des Holzſchnittes von Abraham von Werdt.

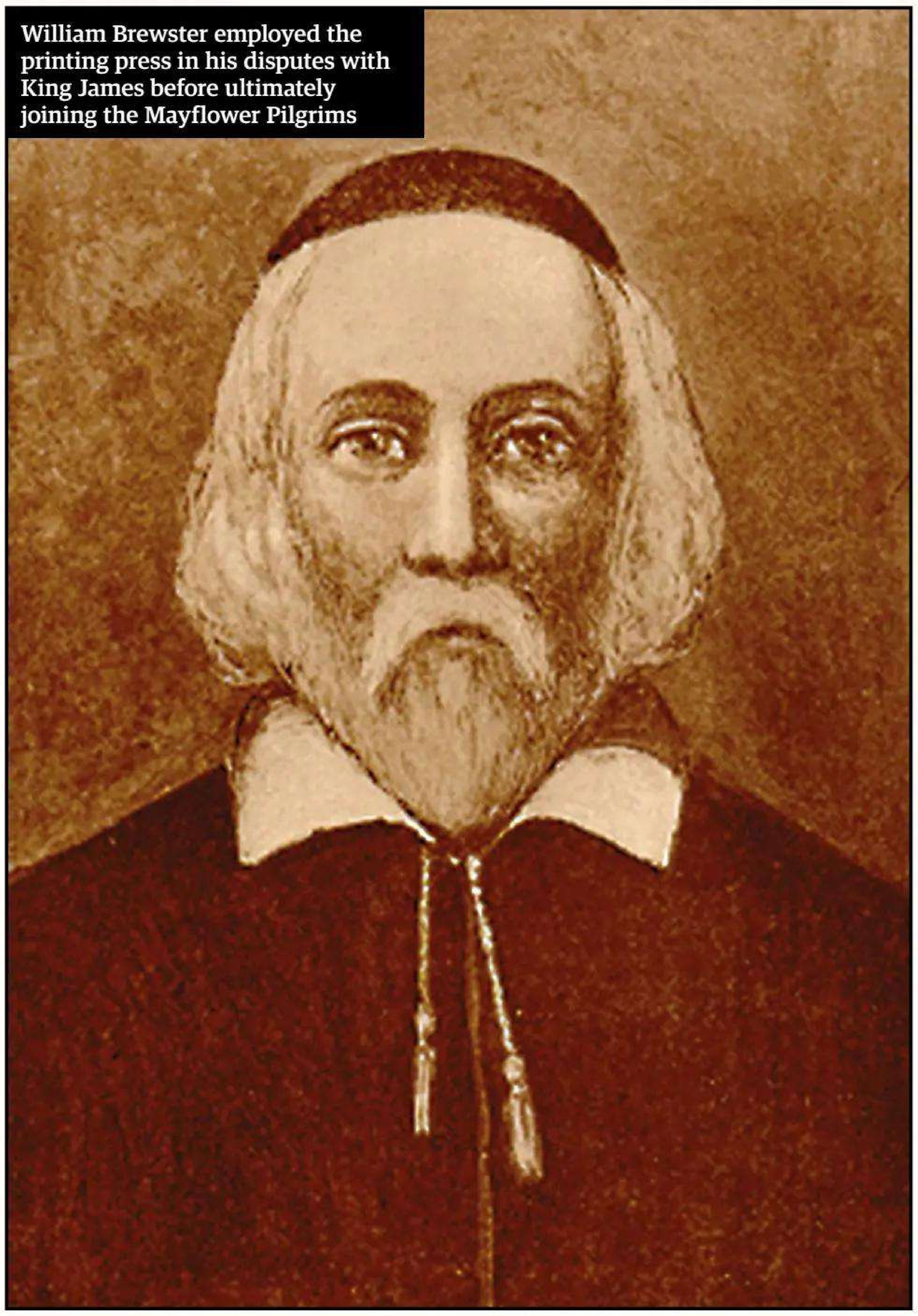
A flat-bed press and other printing equipment at a German printing press in the 17th century

wheeling and dealing, by the time he arrived in London. It was the Puritan clergy who handed him on a plate the opportunity to display himself publicly as a theological expert and a fair-minded monarch, ready to give ear to all his subjects. The reformist element among the clergy presented him with the Millenary Petition, supposedly bearing a thousand signatures requesting reform of some practices. By way of response James summoned representatives of the senior clergy to a three-day conference held at Hampton Court Palace in January 1604. Some of the radicals' main complaints were aired. Some modest reforms of Church practice were agreed (though many were not followed up) but the king was far from being a neutral chairman. Twice he harangued the assembled divines at length and when the issue of Presbyterian government came up James forcefully made his position clear to the extremists:

"If you aim at a Scotch Presbytery, it agreeth as well with Monarchy as God and the Devil [If episcopacy was abolished] I know what would become of my Supremacy, for NO BISHOP, NO KING ... If this is all your party have to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse."

The king, thus, firmly tied the episcopate to the Crown and the Crown to the episcopate; any other pattern for Church and state was dead in the water. For all Presbyterians and Separatists the change of monarch had changed nothing. Even when, inside two years, the Gunpowder Plot exposed the lengths to which Catholic extremists were prepared to go, there was no shift of royal policy in favour of Protestant extremists. James by then had already opened negotiations with the old enemy, Catholic Spain. It is doubtful whether he was serious in his threat of harrying ultra-Protestants out of the land but several of them began to question whether they could, in good conscience, continue to be loyal subjects of James Stuart.

One such was William Brewster (c.1566-1644), a gentleman of a good Nottinghamshire family. His father was bailiff of Scrooby Manor, an estate belonging to the Archbishop of York and also postmaster on the Great North Road, which entailed keeping a good supply of horses for royal officials, merchants and other important travellers moving to and from the capital and the queen's court. As such he was well informed of all the latest news. More importantly, he was well known to the leaders of East Midland society at the peak of which stood the queen's favourite, Lord Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, his brother Ambrose, Earl



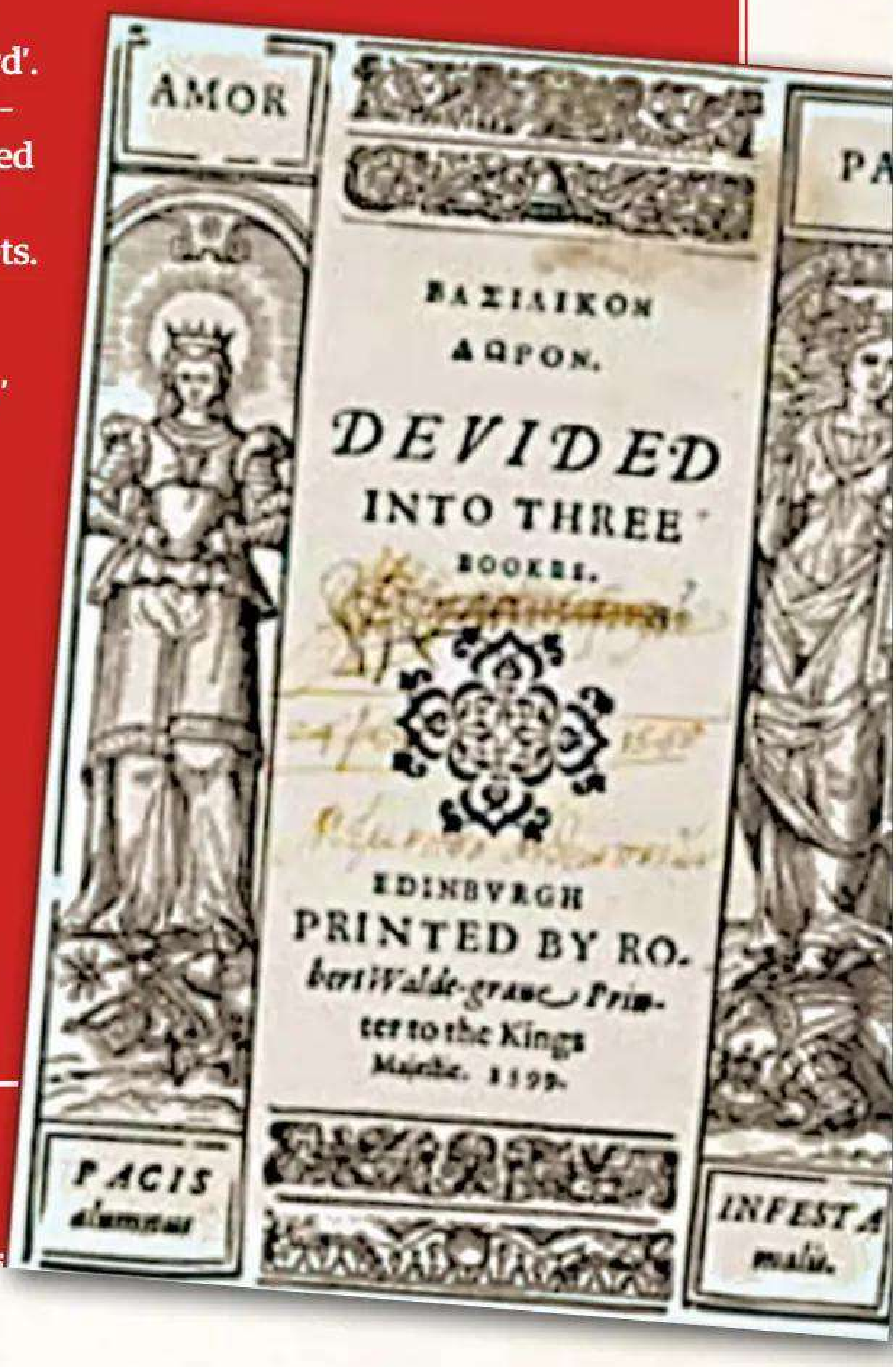
William Brewster employed the printing press in his disputes with King James before ultimately joining the Mayflower Pilgrims

Basilikon Doron

James's definition of kings as 'little gods' reflected his conflicts with Scottish noble factions

In 1599 James VI of Scotland printed a 'Royal Gift' ('Basilikon Doron' in Greek) to his elder son Henry, Duke of Rothesay. It was a treatise on 'kingship', as that word was understood by its author. James counsels his heir to concentrate on three things. First comes his duty to God, an obligation stemming from two facts – 'first, that he made you a man' (ie a member of the superior half of the human race) 'and next that he made you a little God to sit on his Throne, and rule over other men'. His second responsibility was to his people. This needs to be based on firmness. James claimed to have discovered this from bitter experience: 'when I thought (by being gracious at the beginning) to win all men's hearts [...] I by the contrary found the disorder of the country and the loss of thanks to be my reward'. Third, James dealt with 'household management' – Henry's dealing with his court, a subject that ranged from personal dress and table manners to careful choice of attendants who knew how to keep secrets.

'Basilikon Doron' has to be seen alongside another treatise by James published in the previous year. 'The True Law of Free Monarchies' set out more straightforwardly the principle of the divine right of kings. It rejected the claim urged by some political philosophers that legitimate rule was based on a contract between king and people. Drawing on his own struggle with nobles and ministers of religion, James denounced Catholics, Puritans, fractious parliaments and any subjects who sought to thwart the will of their divinely appointed sovereign. In practice, James tempered his royal behaviour when he became King of England. His son, Charles I, who succeeded him in 1625, did not. He lost his head.



ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΝ
ΔΩΡΟΝ.
DEVIDED
INTO THREE
BOOKES.
EDINBVRGH
PRINTED BY RO-
bert Walde-graue, Prin-
ter to the Kings
Maiestie. 1599.

AMOR
PA
PACIS
alumnus
INFESTA
malis.

The 'Basilikon Doron', printed at the request of James VI of Scotland in 1599

> *"James was deliberately forming alliances with nations on both sides of the religious divide"*

of Warwick, and William Cecil, Baron Burghley, all of whom were champions of the Puritan cause. Brewster senior was, therefore, well placed to set his son's feet on the ladder of preferment. Young William was sent to Cambridge, after which (ca 1584) he obtained a place in the entourage of William Davison (or Davidson), a prominent courtier/diplomat and a man of strong Puritan views who was married to a relative of Robert Dudley. Davison's career from 1566 to 1586 largely involved representing Elizabeth in negotiations with Scotland (where he strongly favoured the Presbyterian faction) and the Netherlands (where he worked hard to encourage the Dutch rebels against Spanish rule). Between 1584 and 1586 Brewster accompanied Davison when he was envoy to the republican Seven Provinces, struggling against Spanish rule. When, in 1587, Davison was appointed principal secretary to the Queen and member of the Privy Council, Brewster's further rise seemed assured.

Unfortunately, Davison fell from favour through no fault of his own during the crisis over Mary, Queen of Scots. He was caught between Elizabeth, who desperately wanted to avoid having Mary executed, and the Council, who just as desperately, wanted to be rid of Mary, an inevitable focus of plots against the English queen. In February 1587, Mary was executed (an act which, in the fullness of time, brought her son, James, to the throne of England) and Elizabeth put the blame on Davison for delivering her signed death warrant to Mary's jailers without her permission. It is more than possible that Elizabeth had taken a dislike to Davison's forthright 'advice' and that this was one reason for making him a scapegoat. The secretary was not the only Puritan who, in Elizabeth's opinion, showed less deference to her than they should have done. Whatever the reason, Davison's career nosedived and he spent the rest of his life in reduced circumstances.

Brewster's court career also came to an abrupt end. He returned to Scrooby and took over his father's positions of postmaster and bailiff. He was now in the full flower of manhood and threw himself enthusiastically into the Puritan cause (and, later, the Separatist cause). He used his influence to bring radical preachers to the area. Increasingly he fell foul of the Church authorities for 'gadding about' to hear Puritan sermons and holding unauthorised Bible study and prayer groups in his own house.

Given Brewster's earlier experiences it is not surprising that he was out of sympathy with the Elizabethan settlement. He would have learned much about how different things were in Scotland where a Presbyterian regime was, at least partially, in operation. He had certainly seen for himself the brave Dutch freedom fighters casting off the 'popish tyranny' of Spain. The house meeting at Scrooby was gradually morphing into a gathered church, the kind of silent protest group that had existed on the fringes of English religion ever since 14th-century Lollards had met together in secret to read forbidden English Bibles. But Brewster and

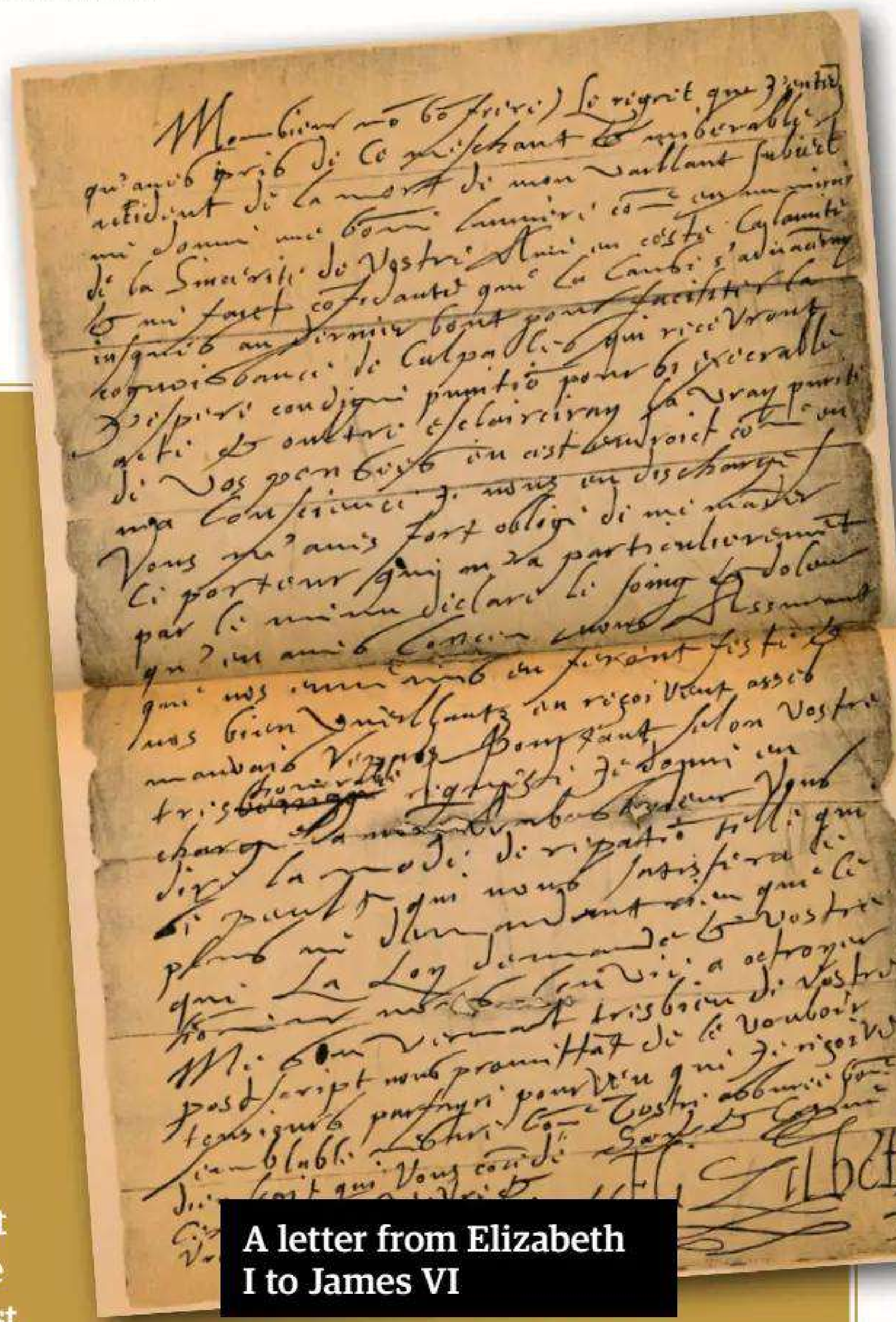
> *"Unfortunately, Davison fell from favour during the crisis over Mary, Queen of Scots"*

his friends probably had no immediate plans for formal separation. For a few years they looked for leadership to Richard Clifton, rector of Babworth, some seven miles away. They were waiting and hoping for better things when James came to the throne. It was their disillusionment with the Stuart regime that made them embrace the idea of exile.

In 1605, Clifton was ousted from his living for refusing to conform to certain Anglican practices. A few months later Clifton, Brewster, John Robinson and other attended an emergency meeting of radicals at Coventry and it was there that Brewster and his friends were among those who committed themselves to moving to the Netherlands in 1608. Although Robinson was the pastor of the exiles, first at Amsterdam and then at Leyden, Brewster was looked up to as the man whose social position and knowledge of life in the Low Countries best fitted him for leadership. He was also, according to contemporary accounts, someone who commended himself to all by his gentleness and amiability.

Yet it was Brewster who roused the ire of James I by going on the religious offensive. He set up a printing press from which came forth a score of books in Latin, English and Dutch. Some were uncontroversial devotional works but others, written pseudonymously by Robinson, the Brownist Francis Johnson and the Scottish fugitive David Calderwood, were attacks on episcopacy and explanations of the principles underlying separatism. These works from what came to be known as the Pilgrim Press, were smuggled across the North Sea into England and Scotland.

King James was furious, not only because of the personal affront to his Church policy, but also because of the impact the seditious works might have on his diplomatic relations with the Dutch Republic and Spain. James, who saw himself as a universal peacemaker, was deliberately forming alliances with nations on both sides of the religious divide. Calderwood was a Scottish minister who had clashed personally with the king. In 1617, James visited his northern kingdom with the intention of speeding up the development of full Episcopal Church government and an increase in royal authority over doctrine and practice. 'The Five Articles of Perth' laid down instructions about five contentious topics and this bitterly divided the general assembly of the Church. James tried main force. He sought a parliamentary statute giving him the right to enforce the changes he wanted without the consent of the assembly. When this was rejected, James went into a rage. 'The Scottish Church [...] shall find what it is to draw the anger of a king,' he threatened. However, on this occasion he gave way.

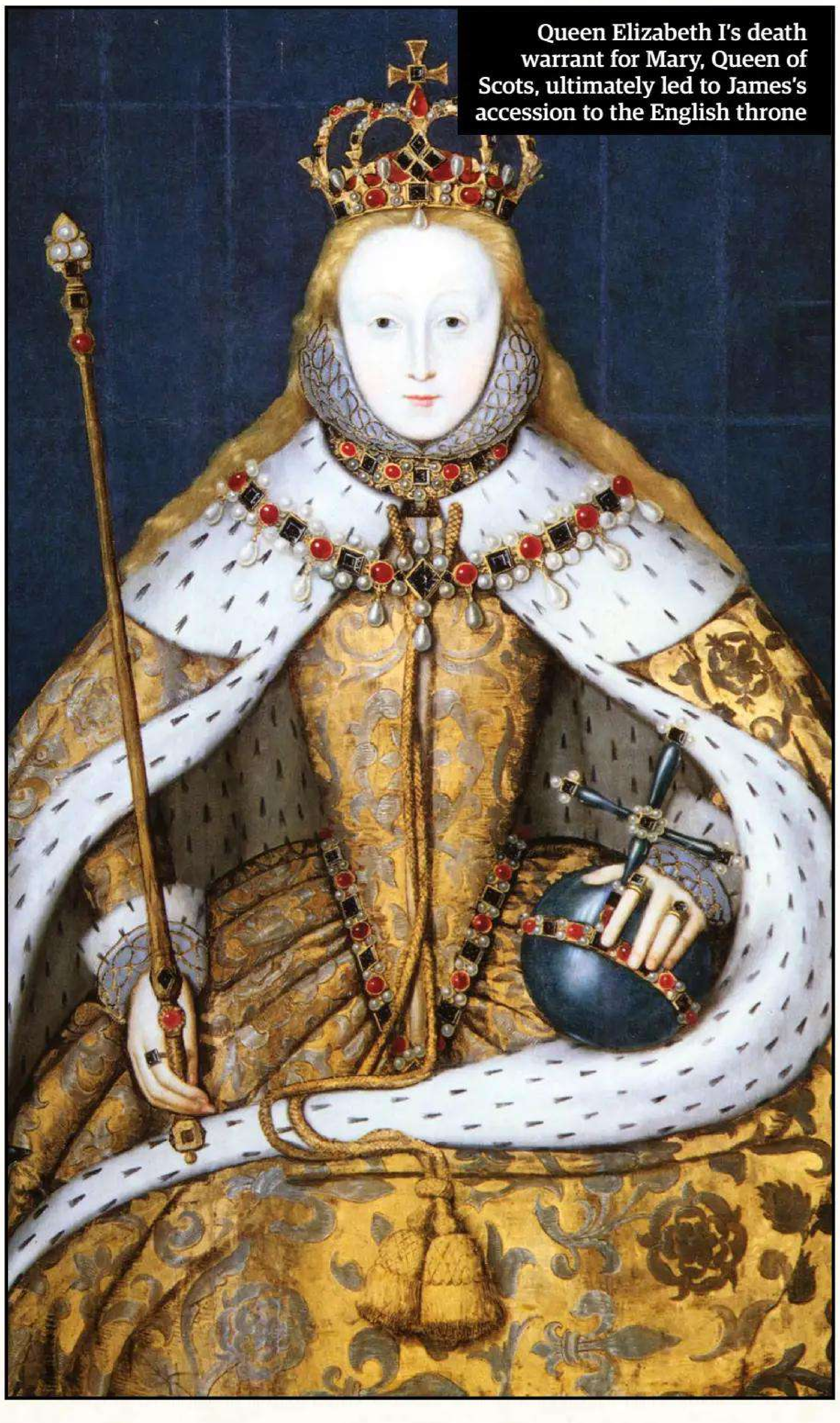


A letter from Elizabeth I to James VI

A Voyage of Misfortune

For years James's eyes were fixed on the English Crown and that involved careful relations with its current wearer

Henry VII's male line died out in 1553. Thereafter, any claimants to the English Crown had to base their claim on descent through the female line. Elizabeth I came to the throne as granddaughter of the first Tudor. Mary Stuart, who became Queen of Scotland in 1542, was Henry's great-granddaughter. Until 1567 there was no possibility of uniting the two kingdoms and ending long years of cross-border hostility (Henry VIII had tried unsuccessfully). Mary was, in fact, half-French and a defender of the 'Auld alliance' between Scotland and France. Two factors changed the situation drastically. Mary was forced to abdicate in 1567 (and subsequently sought refuge in England) after giving birth to her son, James VI. Elizabeth, despite the pleadings of Parliament and her Council, declined either to marry or to name her successor. To do either might create political complications and even danger. In 1585, the two monarchs began a private correspondence, largely concerning foreign policy. The succession was never mentioned (both writers had learned the arts of secrecy and duplicity). Various crises threatened the relationship but the writers continued to assert their mutual friendship. Even when Mary, Queen of Scots was executed, James did not allow the fate of the mother he had never known to sour his relationship with Elizabeth. He referred to her as 'Madame and dearest Sister'. The interests of both parties pointed in the same direction. Elizabeth wanted to minimise French involvement in Scotland and ensure a peaceful transfer of her crown. James was determined to do nothing to hamper his prospects and his escape from the turbulent situation in Scotland. Both monarchs achieved their goals.

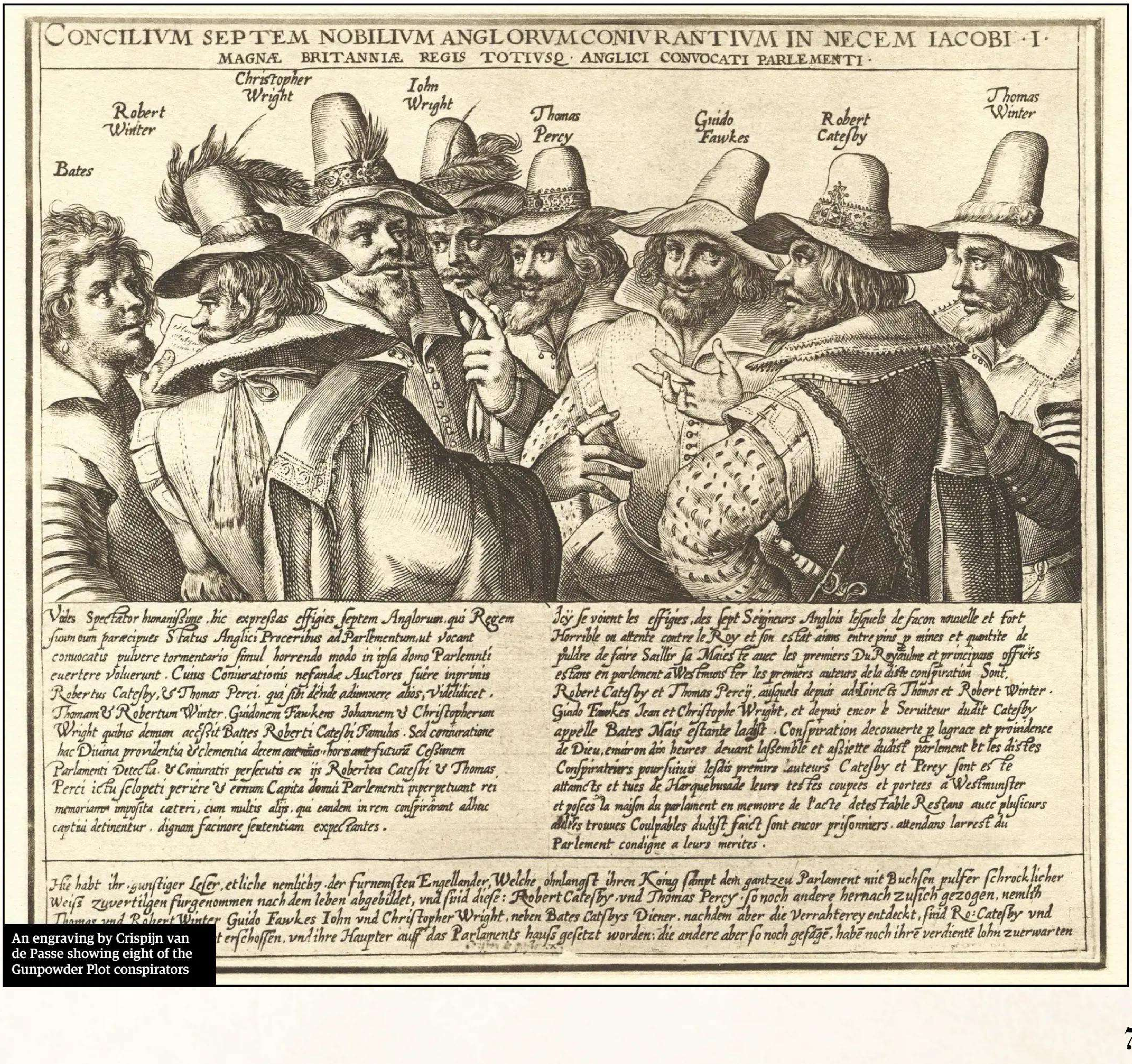


Queen Elizabeth I's death warrant for Mary, Queen of Scots, ultimately led to James's accession to the English throne

One of those who challenged James's authority was David Calderwood. He was summoned before the King and engaged in a long personal argument. James prided himself on dialectic and was confident in browbeating the cleric. Since Calderwood was obliged to remain on his knees, this should not have been all that difficult. However, he stuck to his guns and replied firmly and unflinchingly. Frustrated, James berated him as a 'false Puritan' and 'a very knave'. He had the defiant minister clapped in prison, removed from office and deported. Thus it was that Calderwood made his way to Leyden.

There he wasted no time making his case fully in print. He gave his account of the proceedings at Perth and followed it with 'A Brief Account of the Governance of the Scottish Church'. These were issued from the Pilgrim Press in 1618. The English ambassador, Sir Dudley Carleton, was ordered to leave no stone unturned in getting the press dismantled and the operatives arrested. Fortunately – and ironically – when the raid occurred Brewster was in London beginning to make arrangements for the Pilgrims' voyage to America. He thus survived to play the leading role in the establishment of the American Plymouth colony.

The Pilgrim Press also survived – or, rather, gave birth to a successor. Much of the print was spirited away and taken to Amsterdam where a member of the Separatist Church, Giles Thorpe, made use of it producing yet more works critical of the English Church. For several decades Amsterdam was the hub of a network of 'little Genevas' – groups of believers confident that they had established the perfect Christian community. They exchanged preachers; they exchanged letters; they exchanged books. Brewster's printworks was not the only subversive Puritan propaganda operation working in the Low Countries. In 1626, the Archbishop of Canterbury complained also at the flood of 'sundry schismatical books' entering the country from Amsterdam. The gathered Church left behind in Leyden was every bit as important as the group of passengers who sailed on the Mayflower. It was they who, from afar, encouraged their brothers and sisters in Stuart England. They were the people who toppled James I's son and put an end to divine-right monarchy.


CONCILIVM SEPTEM NOBILIVM ANGLORVM CONIVRANTIVM IN NECEM IACOBI · I ·
MAGNÆ BRITANNIÆ REGIS TOTIVSQ · ANGLICI CONVOCATI PARLEMENTI ·
Bates
Robert Winter
Christopher Wright
Iohn Wright
Thomas Percy
Guido Fawkes
Robert Catesby
Thomas Winter

Vides Spectator humaniſsime, hic expreſsas effigies ſeptem Anglorum, qui Regem ſuum cum paræcipues Status Anglici Proceribus ad Parlementum, ut vocant conuocatis pulvere tormentario ſimul horrendo modo in ipſa domo Parlemnti euertere voluerunt. Cuius Coniurationis nefandæ Auctores fuère inprimis Robertus Cateſby, & Thomas Perci. qui ſibi deinde adiunxere alios, videlidicet. Thomam & Robertum Winter. Guidonem Fawkens Iohannem & Chriſtopherum Wright quibus demum acceſsit Battes Roberti Cateſbi Famulus. Sed coniuratione hac Diuina providentia & clementia decem aut nūus horis ante futurā Ceſsimem Parlamenti Detecta. & Coniuratis perſecutis ex ijs Robertus Cateſbi & Thomas Perci ictu ſclopeti periére & eorum Capita domui Parlementi inperpetuant rei memoriam impoſita cæteri, cum multis alijs. qui eandem in rem conſpirârant adhuc captui detinentur. dignam facinore ſententiam expectantes.

Icy ſe voient les effigies, des ſept Seigneurs Anglois leſquels de facon nouuelle et fort Horrible on attente contre le Roy et ſon estat aians entrepins p mines et quantite de pouldre de faire Saillir ſa Maieste auec les premiers Du Royaulme et principaus offiērs estans en parlement a Westmonster les premiers auteurs de la diste conſpiration Sont, Robert Cateſby et Thomas Percij, auſquels depuis adioincts Thomos et Robert Winter. Guido Fawkes Jean et Chriſtophe Wright, et depuis encor le Seruiteur dudit Cateſby appelle Bates Mais eſtante ladiſt. Conſpiration decouuerte p lagrace et prouidence de Dieu, enuiron dix heures deuant laſsemble et aſsiette dudist parlement et les distes Conſpirateurs pourſuiuis leſdis premirs auteurs Cateſby et Percy ſont este attaincts et tues de Harquebusade leurs testes coupees et portees a Westmunſter et poſees ſur la maiſon du parlament en memoire de l'acte detestable Restans auec pluſieurs autres trouues Coulpables dudiſt faict ſont encor priſonniers. attendans larrest du Parlement condigne a leurs merites.

Hie habt ihr, gunſtiger Leſer, etliche nemlich 7. der furnemſten Engellander, Welche ohnlangſt ihren Konig ſampt dem gantzeu Parlament mit Buchſen pulfer ſchrocklicher Weiſs zuvertilgen furgenommen nach dem leben abgebildet, vnd ſind dieſe: Robert Cateſby, vnd Thomas Percy, ſo noch andere hernach zuſich gezogen, nemlth Thomas vnd Robert Winter Guido Fawkes Iohn vnd Chriſtopher Wright, neben Bates Catſbys Diener. nachdem aber die Verrahterey entdeckt, ſind Ro: Cateſby vnd … t erſchoſſen, vnd ihre Haupter auff das Parlaments hauſs geſetzt worden: die andere aber ſo noch gefāgē, habē noch ihrē verdientē lohn zuerwarten

An engraving by Crispijn van de Passe showing eight of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators

ENDURING ELEGANCE:

THE KING JAMES BIBLE

The King James Bible, conceived as both a religious and political tool, survives as an iconic translation of the Scriptures into the English language

"I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!" railed William Tyndale in a stinging retort to a warning that many of his opinions were contrary to the position of the church.

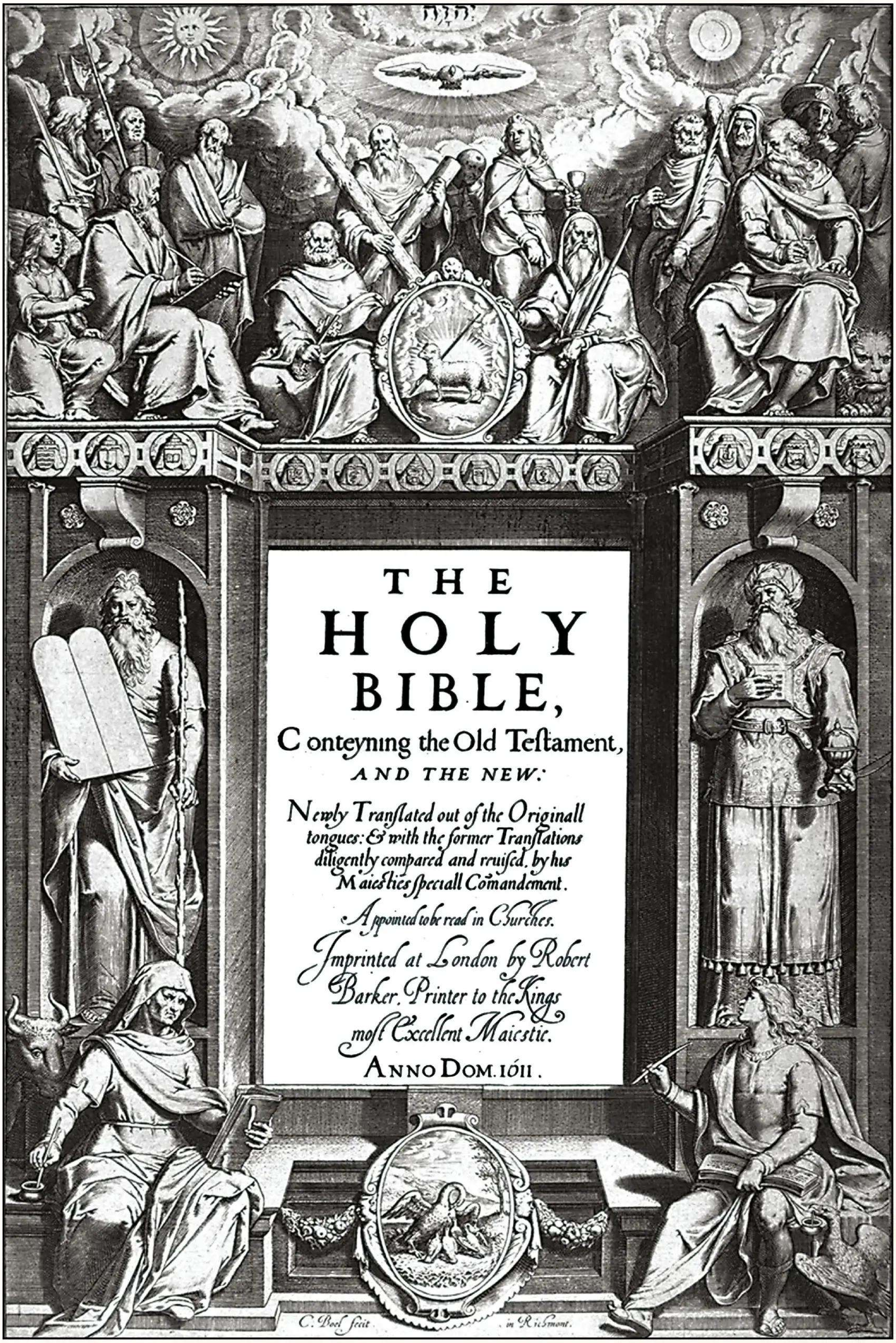
After fleeing England in 1524, the religious scholar Tyndale completed the first translation of the New Testament into English directly from Hebrew and Greek texts rather than Latin. As it was distributed, church leaders suppressed the translation since it threatened their control of access to the Scriptures and might undermine their authority if the common Englishman could read the Bible for himself. Tyndale was strangled and his lifeless body burned at the stake in Vilvoorde, Belgium, in 1536. His last words were reportedly, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!"

For decades, simple possession of Tyndale's historic work might have meant a death sentence in England, but by the early 17th century the situation had changed. The Bishops' Bible, an English translation commissioned under the authority of the Church of England in 1568, was the official text in use by its bishops and clergy at that time. The Geneva Bible, produced in complete form in 1560, was the primary text of European Protestantism and the most popular contemporary translation in England. The Great Bible, the first authorised English translation of the Bible, dating to the 1530s, was also in circulation.

Tyndale's translation is significant for another reason. Its accuracy since it was translated from original Greek and Hebrew, along with its eloquence and sheer linguistic beauty, gained it lasting popularity. The work that cost Tyndale his life also became the foundation for much of the King James Bible. Scholars estimate that as much as 90 per cent of the King James Version's New Testament is based on Tyndale's translation.

Upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, King James VI of Scotland also became King James I of England. The church was already in the throes of the Protestant Reformation. The Church of England, administered by an elite cadre of bishops and clergy, wielded tremendous power. The Puritans sought to fully implement principles of the Reformation and to distance the already separate church from the influence of the pope in Rome. The Catholics were loyal to the Holy See and wished for a complete return to the fold of the original church. The Presbyterians were particularly interested in eliminating the hierarchy of bishops and advocated its replacement with lay officials such as elders or presbyters.

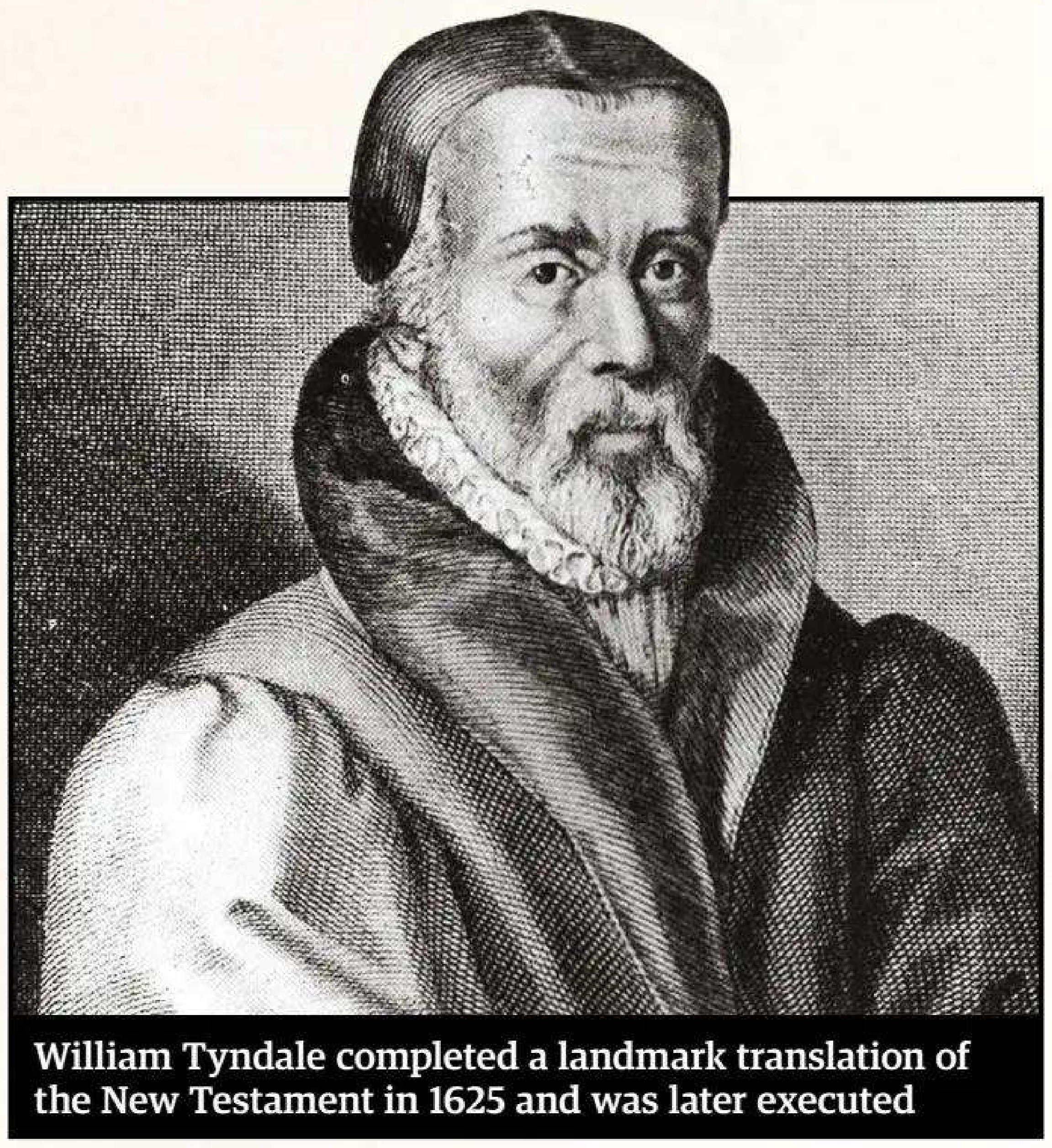
Although many Presbyterians and Puritans believed that the Scottish King James would support their initiatives, they were mistaken. James was a firm believer in the Divine Right of Kings, the premise that kings inherited their right to rule their nation directly from God. Therefore, any movement that might weaken the position of the bishops and the Church of England might eventually threaten his own security and had to be silenced. Still, the king realised that in order to maintain the peace he would be compelled to recognise the influence of the Puritans and



THE
HOLY
BIBLE,
Conteyning the Old Teſtament,
AND THE NEW:
Newly Tranſlated out of the Originall
tongues: & with the former Tranſlations
diligently compared and reuiſed, by his
Maieſties ſpeciall Cōmandement.
Appointed to be read in Churches.
Imprinted at London by Robert
Barker, Printer to the Kings
moſt Excellent Maieſtie.
ANNO DOM. 1611.

C. Boel fecit in Richmont.

Image Sources ✱ Getty Images, Wikipedia

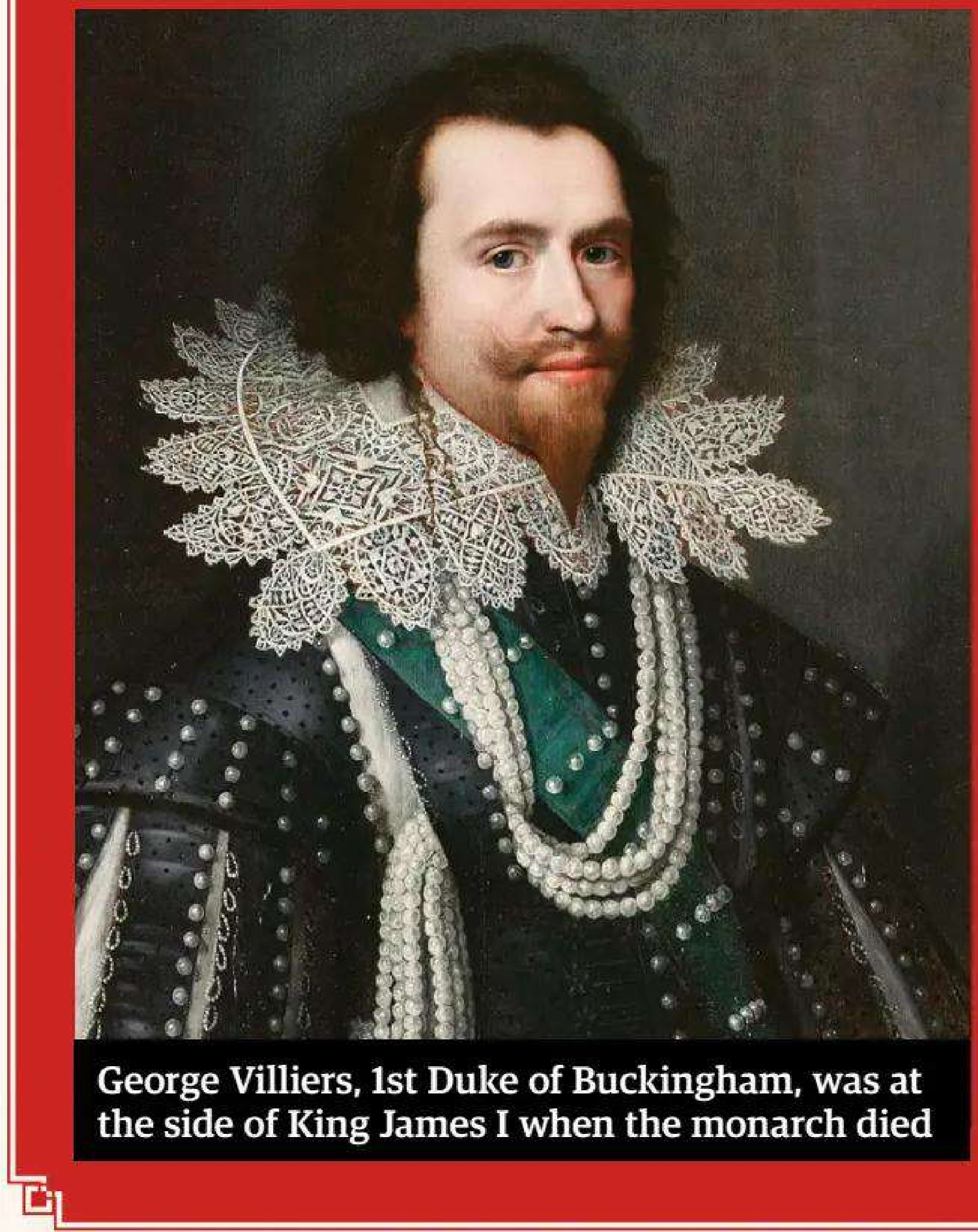


William Tyndale completed a landmark translation of the New Testament in 1625 and was later executed

A Closeted Monarch?

While King James I is remembered as a pious man, he is also known to have carried on homosexual relationships. The king must have found a rationalisation in order to have come to terms with his sexual orientation and awareness that it was considered by many to be incompatible with Christian teaching. As early as the age of 13, James exhibited open affection for Esmé Stewart, 1st Duke of Lennox. King James also had a relationship with Robert Carr, 1st Earl of Somerset, who blackmailed him with the threat of revealing that they had been homosexual lovers.

Perhaps King James's most ardent homosexual affair was carried on with George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham. The king compared his love for Buckingham with Jesus's love of His disciple John. "I, James, am neither a god nor an angel, but a man like any other," the king wrote. "Therefore I act like a man and confess to loving those dear to me more than other men. You may be sure that I love the Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else… I wish to speak in my own behalf and not to have it thought to be a defect, for Jesus Christ did the same, and therefore I cannot be blamed. Christ had John, and I have George."



George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, was at the side of King James I when the monarch died

Presbyterians. At the same time, those holding influential positions within the Church of England had a tremendous stake in retaining the status quo. In time, these sharp divisions within the Christian community contributed to the outbreak of the English Civil War.

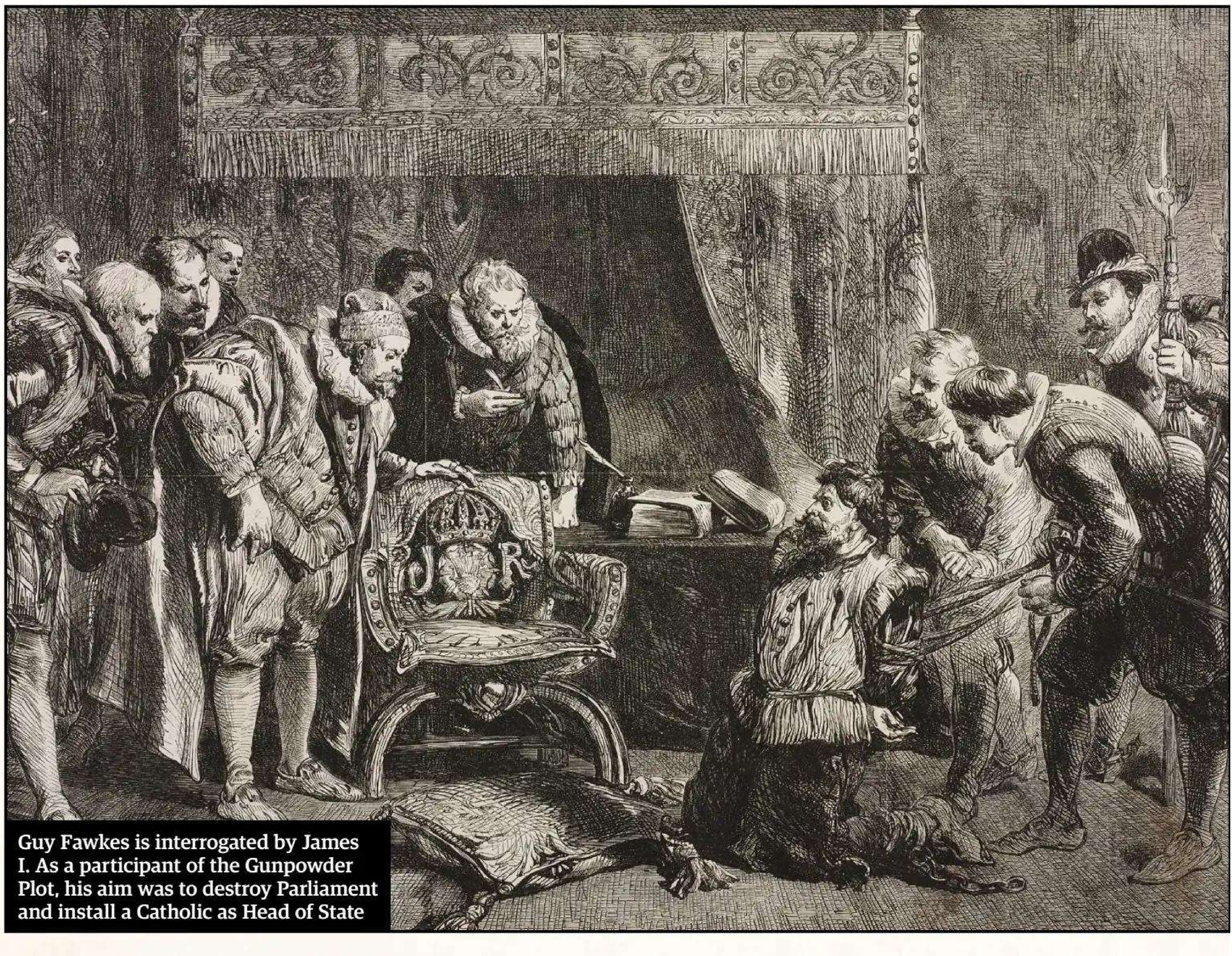
However, in April 1603, as James journeyed from Edinburgh to London for his English coronation, both peril and opportunity awaited. On the road southward, James and his entourage were met by a delegation of Puritans, who had wasted no time in marshalling their intellectual forces. They presented the new king with a document that has come to be known as the Millenary Petition. With more than 1,000 signatures of Puritan clergymen and leaders, the petition asked James for freedom from the rigid rites of the established church, its trappings, and its elitist hierarchy. The signatures represented roughly ten per cent of the English clergy, and the document could not be ignored.

In October 1603, James issued a royal proclamation calling for a conference at Hampton Court Palace on the outskirts of London "for the hearing, and for the determining, things pretended to be amiss with the church." The king's language is telling. Apparently, he did not anticipate changes that would favour the Puritans or Presbyterians to emerge from the conference. Perhaps the great meeting was really only intended as an accommodation, to present an illusion of concern for the petitioners. Nevertheless, an agreement of monumental importance that was not even originally a topic for discussion forcefully emerged.

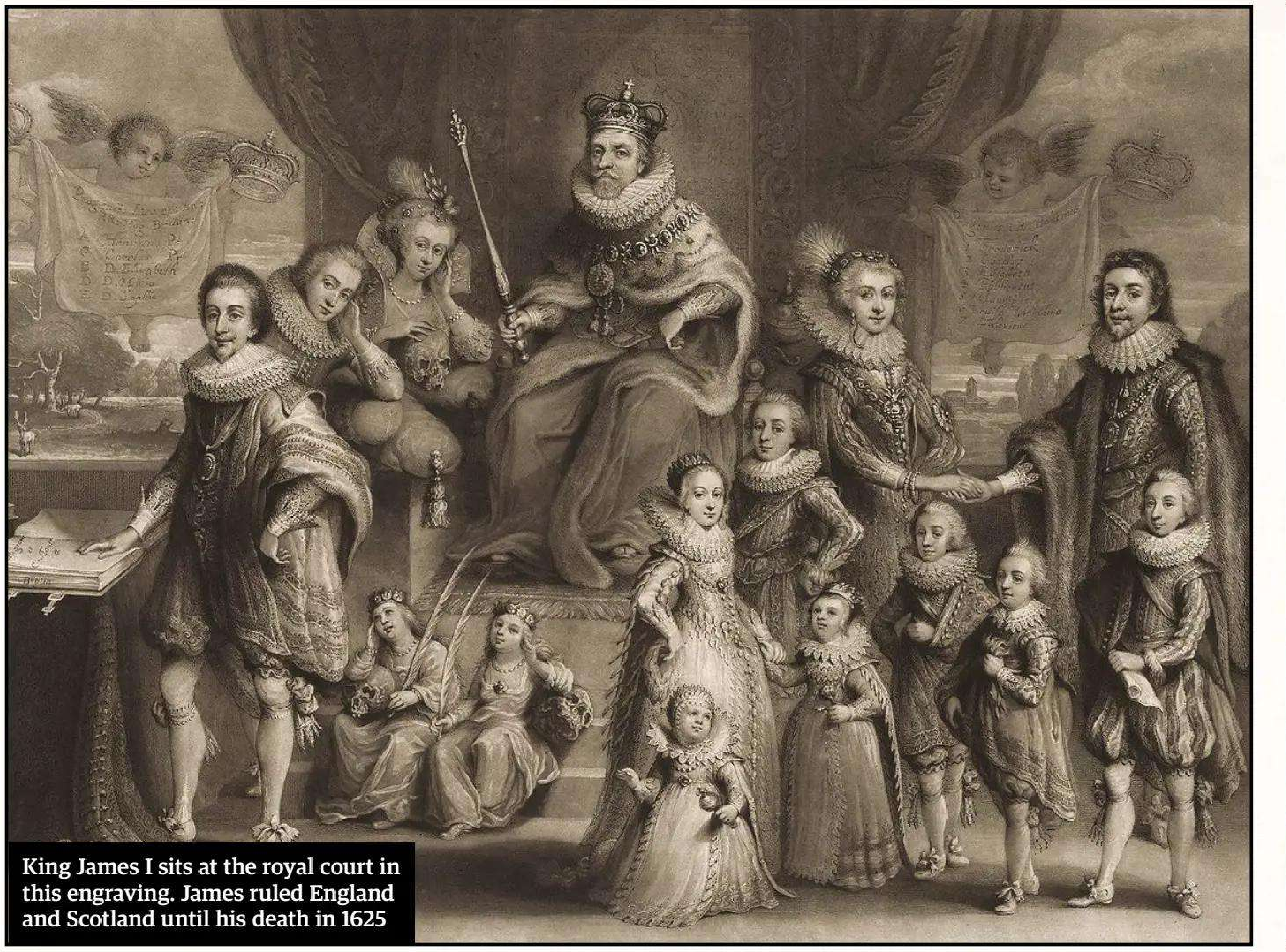
The 1611 King James Bible was physically chained to the pulpit of churches across England

◆

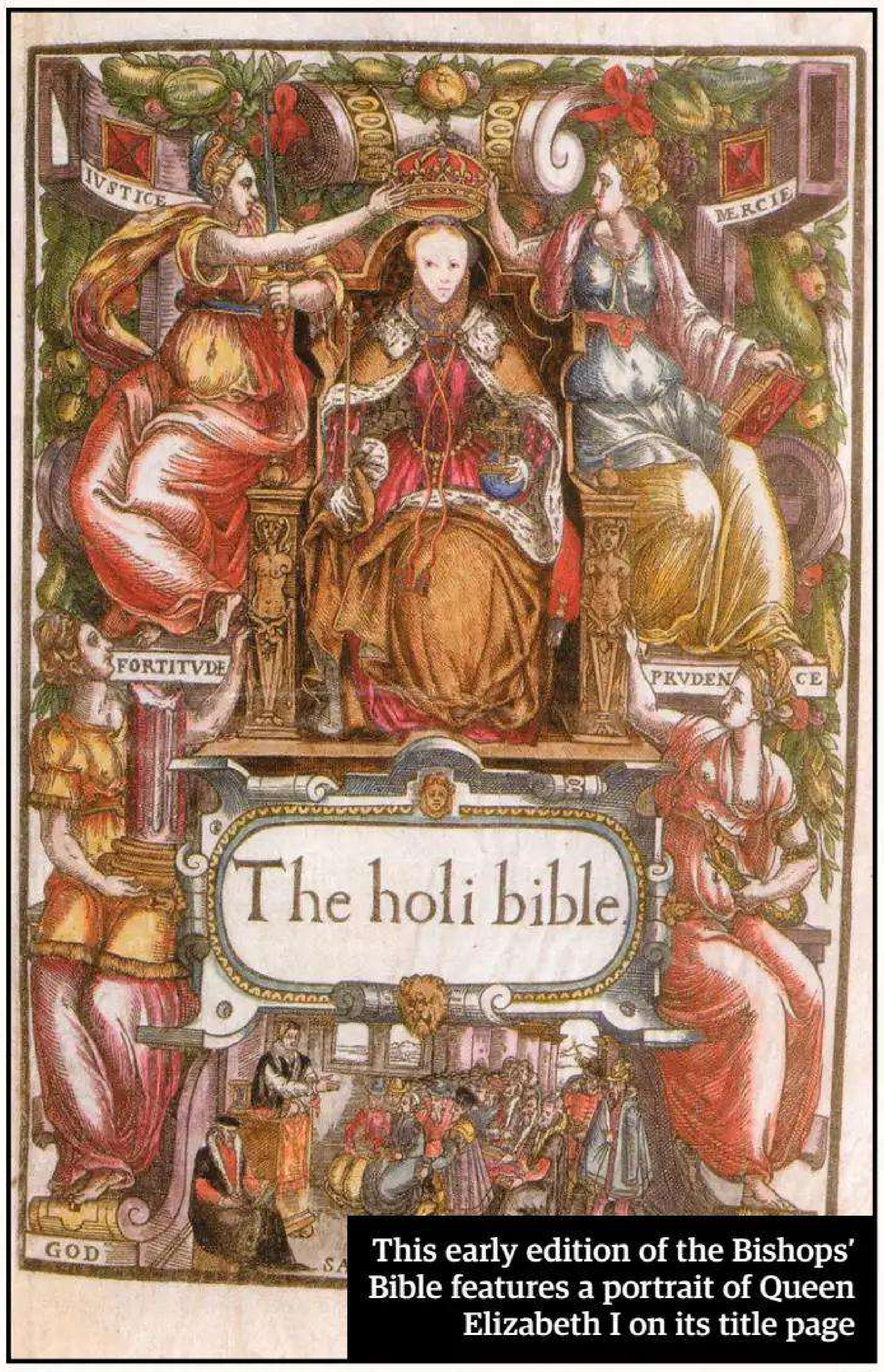
"Rainolds wriggled out of immediate hot water with his suggestion for a new translation of the Bible into English"



Guy Fawkes is interrogated by James I. As a participant of the Gunpowder Plot, his aim was to destroy Parliament and install a Catholic as Head of State



King James I sits at the royal court in this engraving. James ruled England and Scotland until his death in 1625



This early edition of the Bishops' Bible features a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I on its title page

Although there was much that divided them, King James and John Rainolds, the Puritan president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, did find common ground when the latter proposed to undertake a new English translation of the Bible. James despised the Geneva Bible, which was replete with marginal notes and annotations that were blatant indictments of the privileged hierarchy of the Church of England. In fact, he once stated that it contained annotations that were "very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and seditious conceits." In fairness, the Catholics were riled by the marginal notes as well, some of which even referred to the pope as the Antichrist.

Interestingly, the Puritans had been barred from the first day of the conference. When they were allowed to enter on the second day, Rainolds spoke for the Puritan delegation. The immediate uproar nearly caused the conference to implode. Rainolds addressed the king, "Why shouldn't the bishops govern jointly with a presbyterie of their brethren, the pastors and ministers of the church?"

His poor choice of the word 'presbyterie' brought the wrath of the king down swiftly. "If you aim at a Scots Presbyterie, it agreeth as well with monarchy as God and the Devil! Then Jack, and Tom, and Will, and Dick shall meet and censure me and my council… No bishop, no King! If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harrie them out of the land, or else do worse!"

In some 1611 King James editions, an error in the Book of Ruth used the pronoun 'he' rather than 'she'

Rainolds managed to wriggle out of immediate hot water with the king thanks to his suggestion for a new translation of the Bible into English. On 17 January 1604, a resolution was approved "… that the translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes." James I would have his politically palatable Bible free of any extraneous Puritan-inspired commentary. Rainolds had made his proposal in the vain hope that James would turn at least somewhat away from the Bishops' Bible, but the king was clear that the new translation was to be based on this preferred text.

Since Rainolds had made the suggestion, he was given charge of the project. For the next seven years, as many as 50 scholars laboured in the spectacular undertaking. Numerous Biblical translations were consulted, among them the Tyndale New Testament, the Geneva Bible, the Great Bible, the Bishops' Bible, the Coverdale Bible, the Roman Catholic Rheims New Testament, and others.

Rainolds returned to Oxford and began work with other churchmen on a translation involving the prophets. Five other committees worked on remaining sections of the new Bible, painstakingly pondering virtually every word to determine the optimal translation into English. The preliminary texts were then forwarded to colleagues for review and discussion. Sadly, Rainolds did not live to see the completion of the work he had undertaken. He died of tuberculosis in 1607. Still, he gained a measure of his original intent as, along with the Tyndale New Testament, much of the King James Bible is based on the Geneva Bible despite the warning of James I.

From 1605 to 1606, research was conducted. Then, from 1607 to 1609 the various committees assembled their completed portions. Printing began in 1610, and the following year the first of the large pulpit editions, known as the 1611 King James Bible, were introduced. Decades passed before the new translation became as popular as the Geneva Bible and even supplanted it among the people.

Although the King James Bible was commissioned as a bulwark against the Puritan/Protestant Geneva Bible, many modern Protestant churches proclaim the King James as the only valid English translation of the Scriptures. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were zealous in their persecution of Protestants during the 16th century, and when Protestants began to flee to the New World to find religious freedom they brought the Geneva Bible - not the King James - with them.

Still, the King James translation is a work of tremendous scholarship and profound literary quality. It remains the most printed book in history, and while other versions of the Bible have been produced since, it can rightly be said that the King James remained the preferred text for at least 250 years, perhaps only really rivalled by the growing acceptance of the New International Version that emerged in the 20th century.

PLOTS AGAINST THE KING

It wasn't only the Gunpowder Plotters who had designs against royalty; conspirators lurked around many corners, intent on a change of regime

It wasn't only the Gunpowder Plotters who had designs against royalty; conspirators lurked around many corners, intent on a change of regime.

In 1603, just a couple of years before the Gunpowder Plot, the Bye Plot was a conspiracy by an unlikely alliance of Roman Catholic priests and Puritans who sought more tolerance of their beliefs. They intended to kidnap King James VI and I, by then in the early months of the first year of his English reign, and remove powerful members of government, who would be replaced by themselves and other Roman Catholics. The plot was known as the "Bye Plot" as it was just one component of a larger "Main Plot".

Whilst neither scheme never went beyond intense discussion, the plotters, including a number of Catholic priests and Puritans such as Thomas Grey, 15th Baron Grey de Wilton, also entertained the more elaborate "Main Plot" in July 1603, in which the intent was to remove the king from the throne and replace him with his cousin, Lady Arbella Stuart.

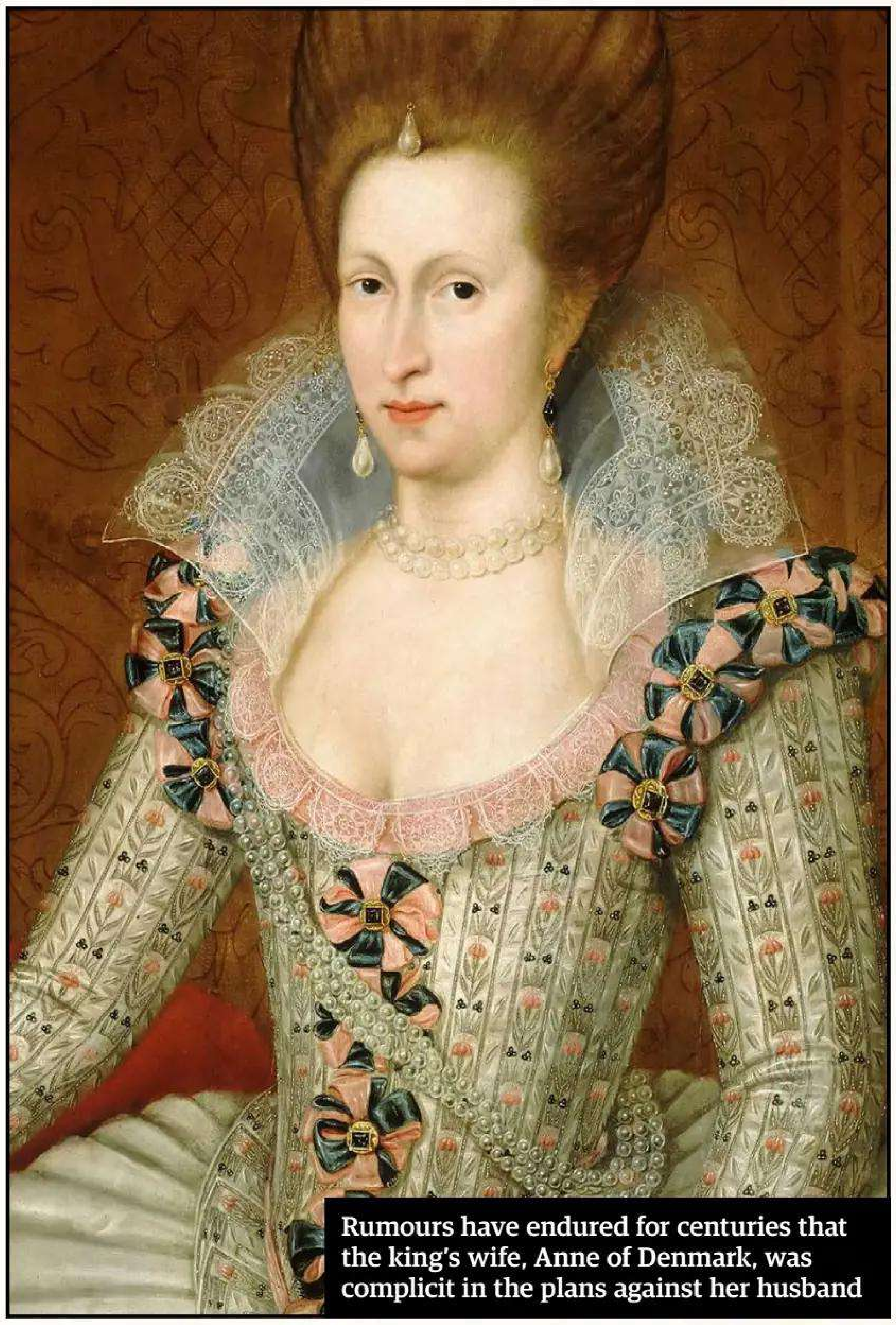
This conspiracy, supposedly funded by the government of Spain and led by Sir Walter Raleigh and Henry Brooke, 11th Baron Cobham, resulted in the arrest of Cobham and other alleged conspirators. Cobham's brother, Sir George Brooke, was arrested for his supposed involvement with the Bye Plot, under which Brooke would be appointed Lord Treasurer.

At the subsequent trial, Raleigh, Cobham and Brooke were found guilty. Both Raleigh and Cobham were released after years in the Tower of London, whilst Brooke, who had attempted to escape execution by informing on his brother, was put to death for high treason in December 1603. Yet there was to be a final twist in the tale, and it struck right at the heart of the royal household.

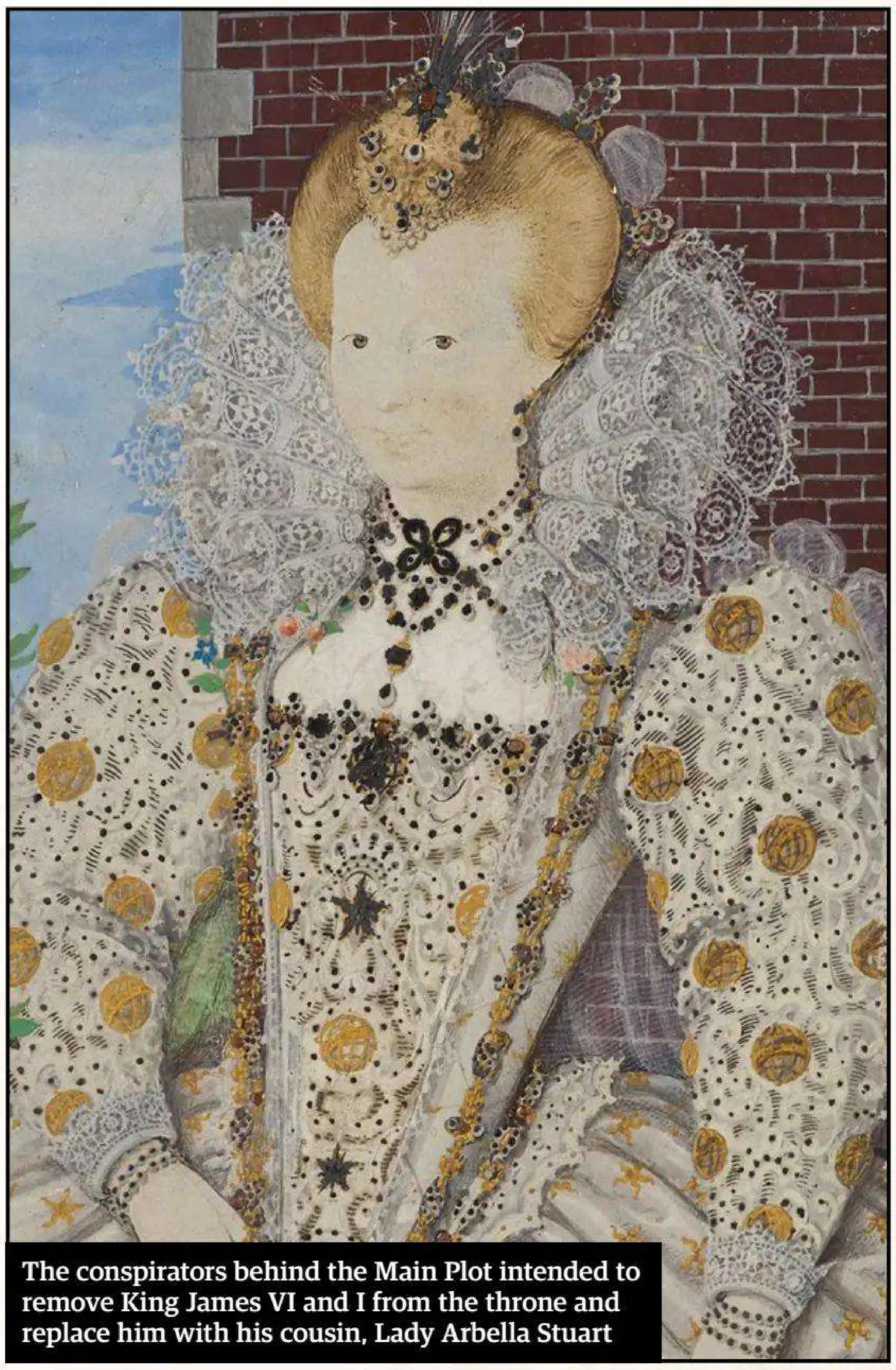
In July 1603, the month in which the conspirators were arrested, King James sent spy Sir Anthony Standen to Italy to convey the news of the king's recent accession to the throne. During his trip to the Vatican, Pope Clement gave Standen a rosary and asked him to present it to Anne of Denmark, the wife of King James.

Anne's rumoured conversion to Catholicism despite her support of her husband's religious policies had already been the cause of heated feelings, and James viewed the Catholic gift of a rosary as beyond the pale. When Standen handed it to the queen, he was arrested and thrown into the Tower. Anne secretly worked for Standen's release and refused to take Anglican communion despite the insistence of a husband she loathed. Thanks to her sympathies, rumours that she covertly supported the Gunpowder Plot continue to this day.

Sir Walter Raleigh was among those implicated in two plots against the king, the Main Plot and the Bye Plot



Rumours have endured for centuries that the king's wife, Anne of Denmark, was complicit in the plans against her husband



The conspirators behind the Main Plot intended to remove King James VI and I from the throne and replace him with his cousin, Lady Arbella Stuart

Image Sources • Wikipedia

KING KILLERS

80 Robert Catesby
82 John and Christopher Wright
84 Robert and Thomas Wintour
86 Guy Fawkes
88 John Grant
90 Thomas Percy
92 Robert Keyes
94 Thomas Bates
96 Ambrose Rookwood
98 Francis Tresham
100 Everard Digby
102 Tarnished by Association

Image Sources ✱ Adobe Firefly

Born:
c. 1572

Died:
8 November 1605

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Mastermind

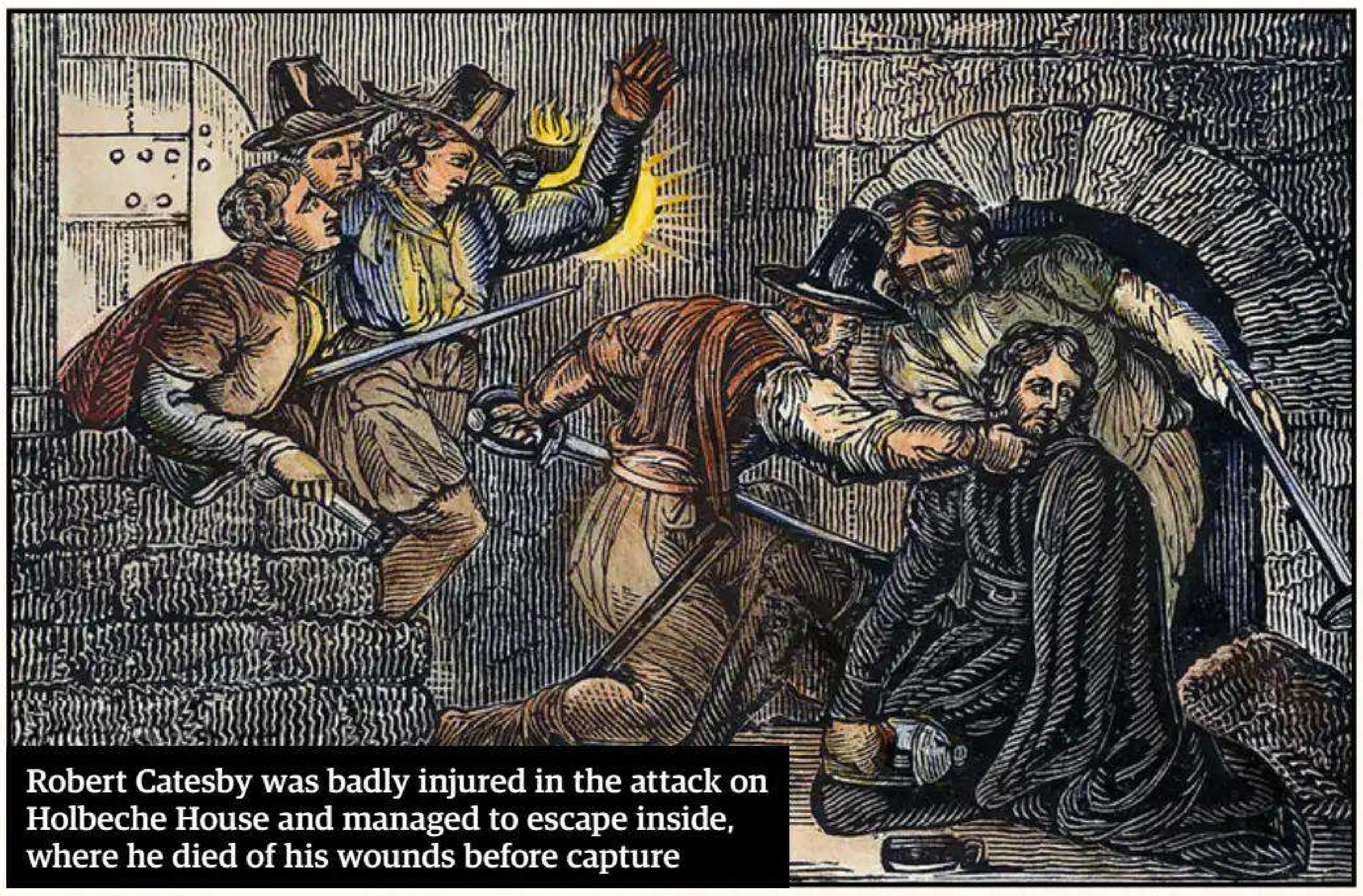
Fate:
Shot

ROBERT CATESBY

The founder and mastermind who drew in other conspirators for one of the most audacious terrorist plots ever seen in England

The one name most people associate with the Gunpowder Plot is Guy Fawkes – but it should be Robert Catesby. It was Catesby who first envisioned an attack on King James I and Parliament and set the plot in motion. Catesby's wealthy father was a well-known Catholic and suffered for his faith. He was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned for his beliefs, and the fines given to him were enormous. Robert must have been shaped by these familial experiences and by the Catholic education he was given at a French seminary. As a potential traitor Catesby was apparently arrested when the Spanish Armada threatened England in 1588, alongside co-plotter Francis Tresham. Catesby joined the Earl of Essex's rebellion in 1601, alongside other future conspirators. When released from prison after this Catesby used his wealth to support the activities of Jesuit priests.

It is not known when exactly Catesby began to formulate the Gunpowder Plot but in 1604 Catesby cautioned Thomas Percy not to do anything hasty against the king as he was already formulating a plan. This plan would be the blowing up of King James I at the opening of Parliament in 1605. Soon afterwards he began recruiting members of the plot. It was Catesby who played the leading role on who to select to join the conspiracy. Catesby was keen to maintain secrecy but also had to involve more people to make use of their money and support. Once the king was dead Catesby planned to raise a Catholic rebellion in the confusion that followed, and kidnap Princess Elizabeth to place on the throne as a puppet. The night before the attack was to take place Catesby left London to start the revolt in the Midlands. News of Guy Fawkes' discovery and the plots unravelling reached Catesby in Dunstable and the conspirators decided to continue with their rebellion. They began by raiding Warwick Castle for horses and weapons. Catesby wrote to Jesuit friends in hope of aid but all urged him to give up the attempt. The plotters were gathered at Holbeche House when they were surrounded by government forces. Catesby was struck down by the bullet which also hit Thomas Percy. Catesby was badly wounded and crawled into the house, where he died holding a golden crucifix. Catesby's head was severed from his body and taken to Westminster as a trophy of the king's deliverance from peril.


Robert Catesby was badly injured in the attack on Holbeche House and managed to escape inside, where he died of his wounds before capture

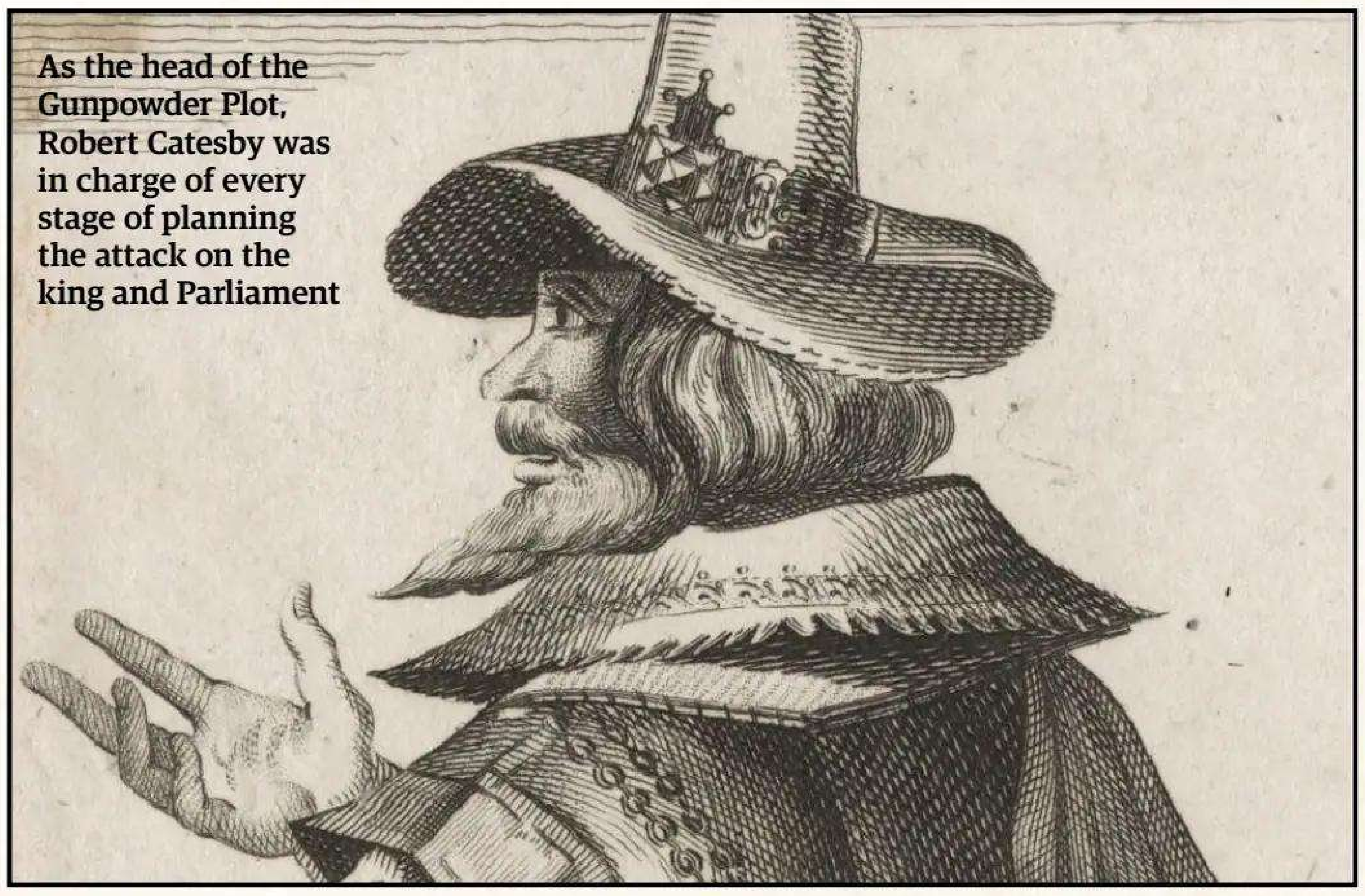

As the head of the Gunpowder Plot, Robert Catesby was in charge of every stage of planning the attack on the king and Parliament

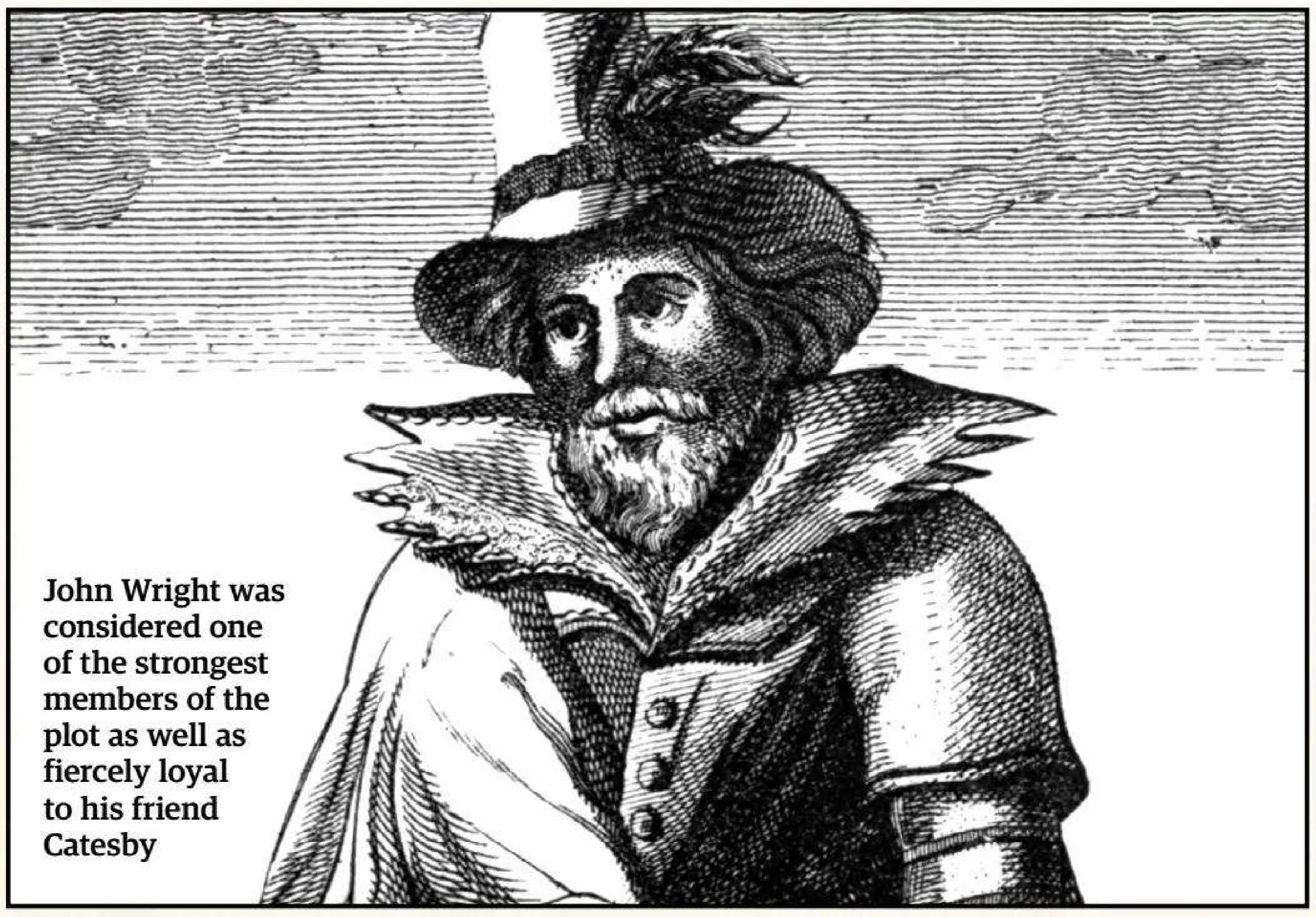
Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

JOHN AND CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

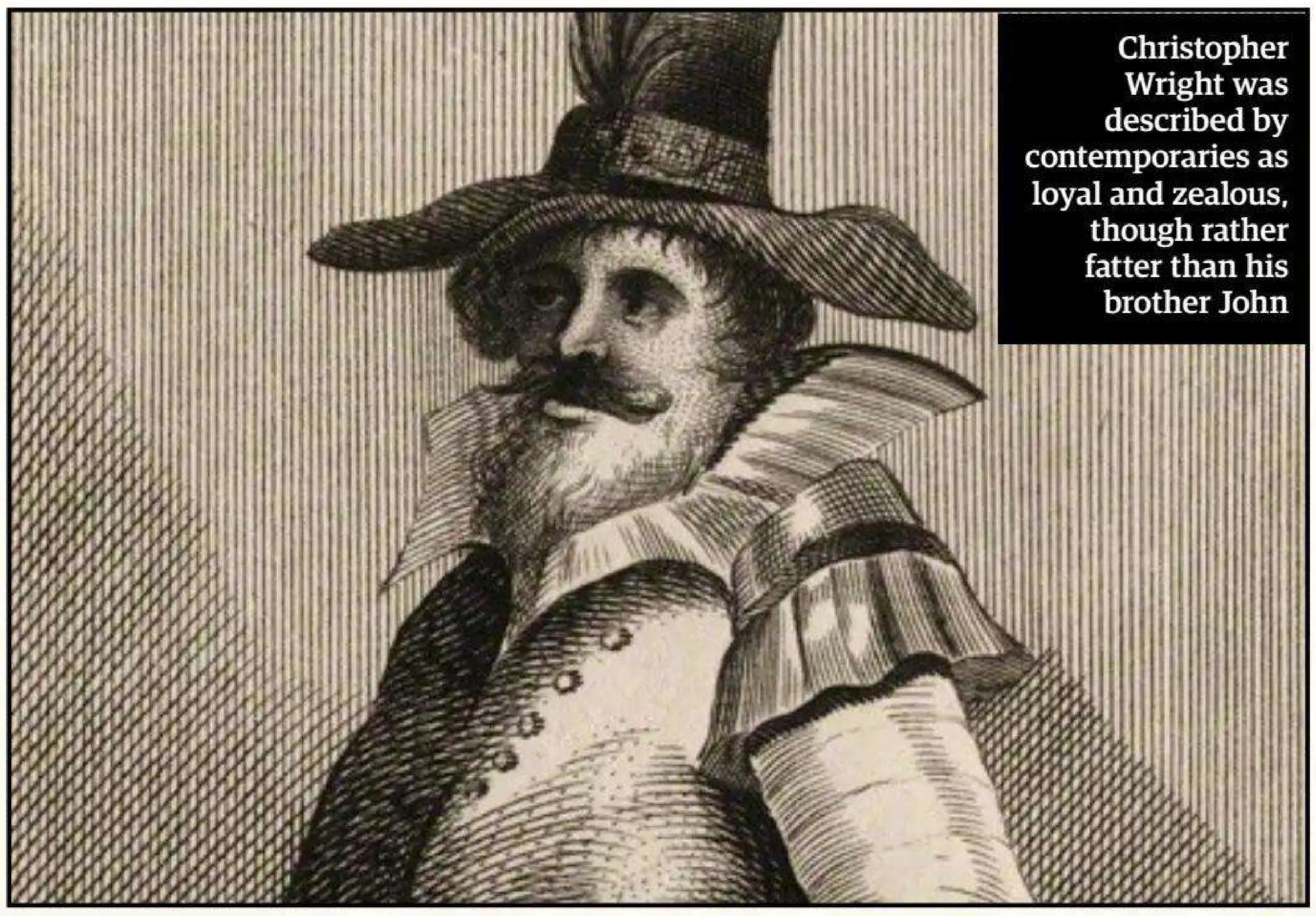
The Catholic brothers who were chosen for their zeal for their faith and willingness to take part in rebellions

The parents of John and Christopher Wright, Robert and Ursula, were known to authorities as Catholics who refused to toe the government line on religion. Robert and Ursula were locked up for recusancy for 14 years in total and so John and Christopher were well aware of the dangers facing Catholics at the time. John and Christopher were educated at St Peter's School, which was known to be a hotbed of Catholic activity. They shared the school with Guy Fawkes and a number of influential Jesuit priests who were also educated there.

When Queen Elizabeth I fell ill in 1596 the government ordered the arrests of notable Catholics as it was feared that a Catholic plot to poison the Queen had taken place. John and Christopher Wright were imprisoned. Both were part of the retinue of the Earl of Essex and when he launched his desultory rebellion in 1601 they followed him. Both were imprisoned for their role in this but later released. John returned to his home in Twigmore Hall which had long been used as a hiding spot for Catholic priests. Christopher Wright was supposedly sent to Europe on a mission to gain support for a Catholic uprising in England but failed to gain any aid. Catesby had known the Wrights since at least the days of the Earl of Essex's rebellion and thought John Wright would be an asset to his plot. He invited John as the third conspirator in 1604, while Christopher was only informed around March 1605. Their role in the plot to was render material aid by providing horses and other help to the conspirators. When Guy Fawkes was discovered with the gunpowder, Christopher was in London and spread the news that the plot had failed. John had remained close to Catesby and was riding north when word reached them. Both brothers were at Holbeche House when the conspirators were surrounded and attacked. John and Christopher were shot and wounded but might have survived had they been treated by a doctor. Instead the attackers stole their clothes and valuables and left them to die. Later their heads were cut off to display in Westminster.



John Wright was considered one of the strongest members of the plot as well as fiercely loyal to his friend Catesby



Christopher Wright was described by contemporaries as loyal and zealous, though rather fatter than his brother John

John and Christopher Wright

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

Born:
c. 1570

Died:
8 November 1605

Occupation:
Soldier

Planned role:
Provide support

Fate:
Shot

JOHN WRIGHT

Born:
13 January 1568

Died:
8 November 1605

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Provide support

Fate:
Shot

Image Sources ● Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

ROBERT WINTOUR

Born:
c. 1568

Died:
30 January 1606

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Preparations and money

Fate:
Executed

THOMAS WINTOUR

Born:
c. 1571

Died:
31 January 1606

Occupation:
Soldier

Planned role:
Preparations

Fate:
Executed

ROBERT AND THOMAS WINTOUR

The brothers at the heart of the plot who offered money, support, and contacts – though one was more involved than the other

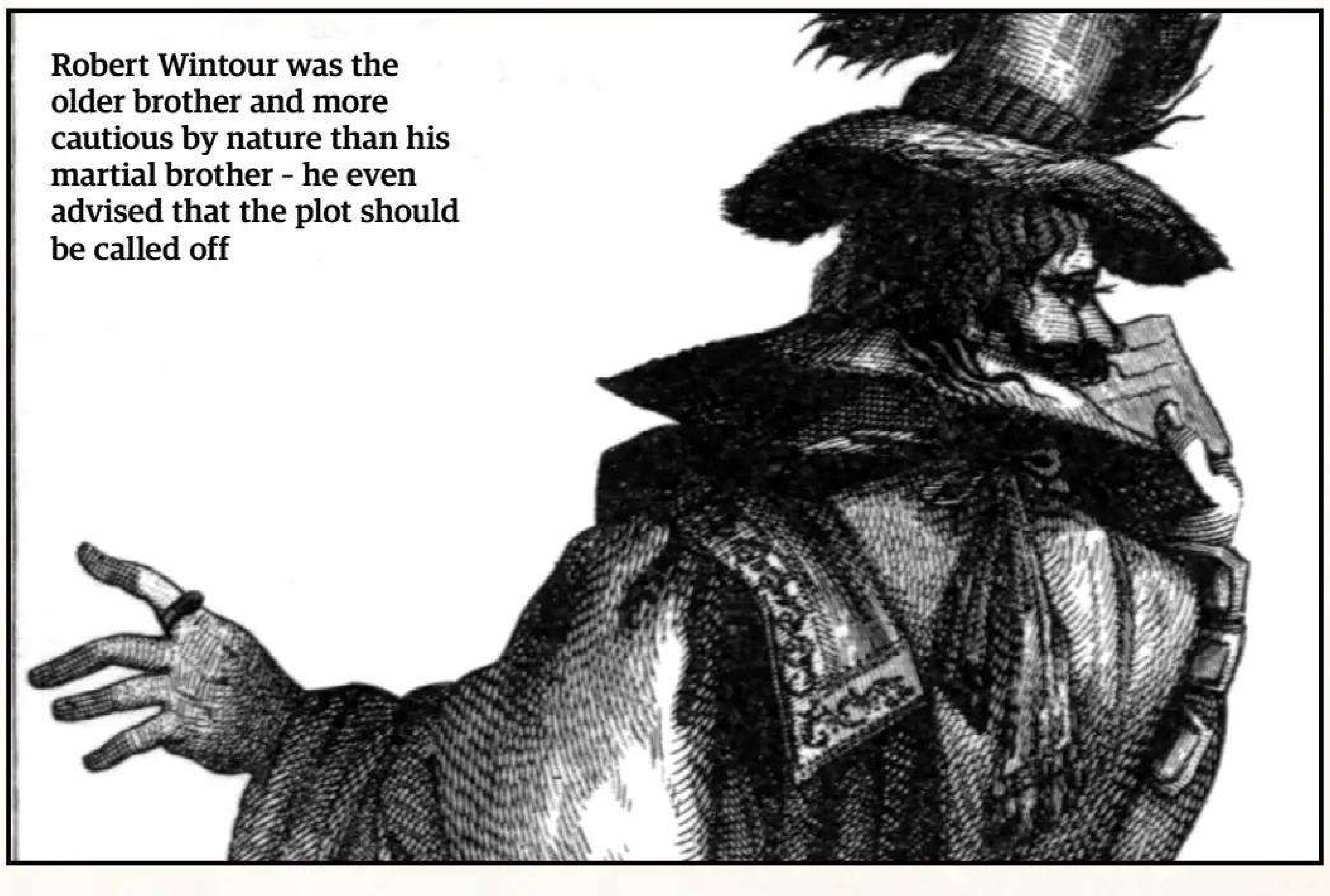
The Wintours came from a prosperous Worcestershire family with a seat at Huddington Hall.. Through their family connections they could claim relationships with important Catholics, Jesuit priests, and Robert Catesby. Robert and John's sister married John Grant, who would also join the Gunpowder Plot. Though both brothers appear to have been confirmed Catholics, Robert might have been content to remain a rich country gentleman but his brother Thomas was a more vigorous man of action. Where Thomas led his older brother followed. As a younger son Thomas Wintour did not stand to inherit great wealth when his father died and so made his career as a soldier fighting in Flanders against Spanish forces. He was so widely regarded for his abilities that it was thought he had the makings of a great general. He came to believe that fighting against the Catholic Spanish was wrong however, and so resigned. Thomas travelled to Rome where he made connections with many Jesuits. In early 1604 Thomas Wintour was invited to meet with Robert Catesby and was introduced to the Gunpowder Plot. Thomas was concerned that a failure of the plot would lead to greater Catholic repression in England but agreed to take part.

He was assigned to seek further help from foreign powers but none were willing to render aid. Robert Wintour was brought into the conspiracy in early 1605 but at first refused to join – he soon changed his mind but at several opportunities hinted that the whole thing should be called off. The Wintours were enlisted to gather weapons and horses for the planned rebellion after the attack.

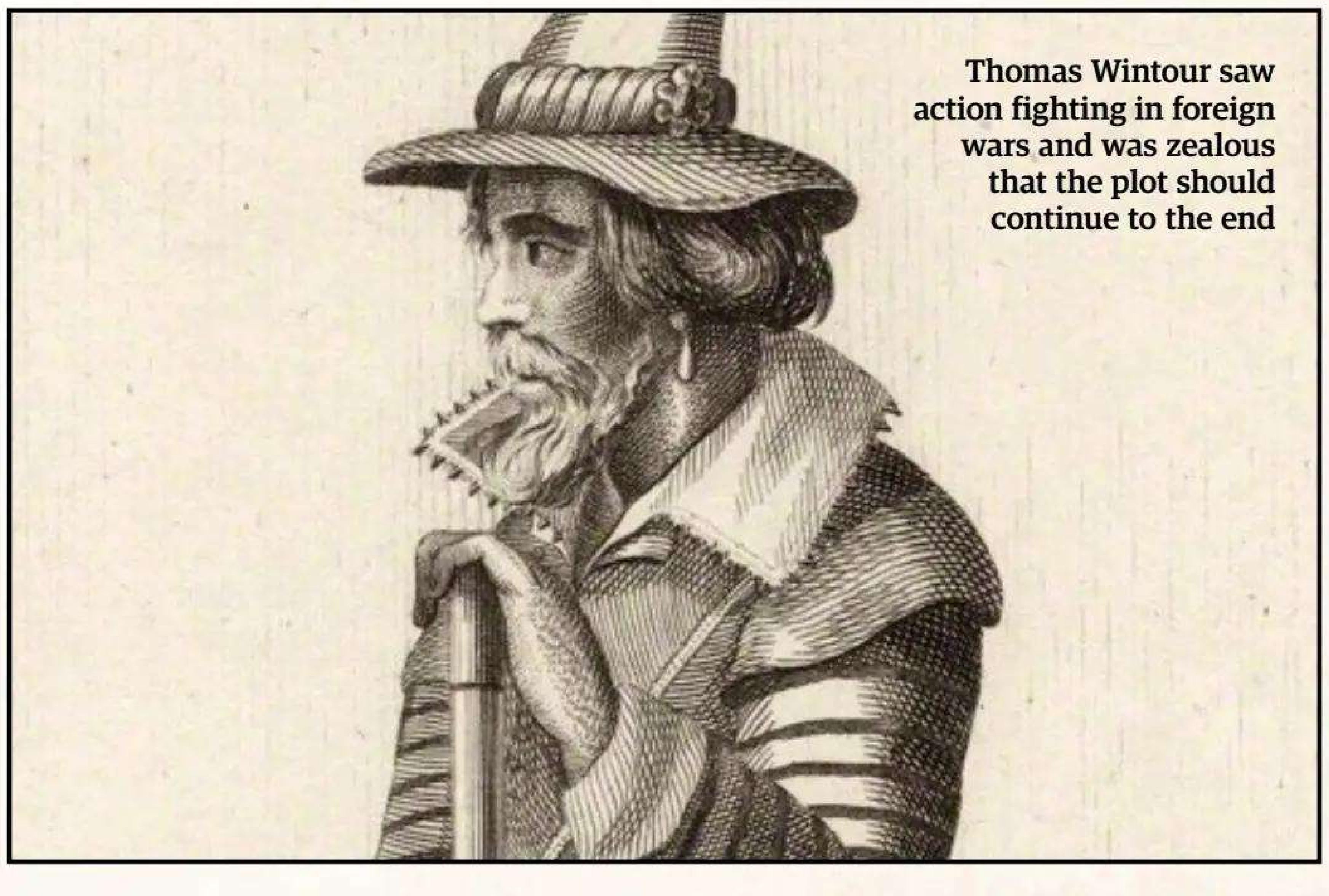
Once the plot was foiled Robert and Thomas joined the other conspirators outside London. Robert was sent to prominent Catholics to drum up support for a revolt but he refused.

Thomas went instead. Robert escaped Holbeche House before it was attacked but Thomas refused to flee. Thomas was captured alive while Robert evaded authorities until 9 January 1606.

While imprisoned Thomas confessed to his crimes and it is from this document that many details of the plot have come down to us. At trial both were sentenced to death. Robert died first and Thomas was killed the following day.



Robert Wintour was the older brother and more cautious by nature than his martial brother – he even advised that the plot should be called off



Thomas Wintour saw action fighting in foreign wars and was zealous that the plot should continue to the end

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

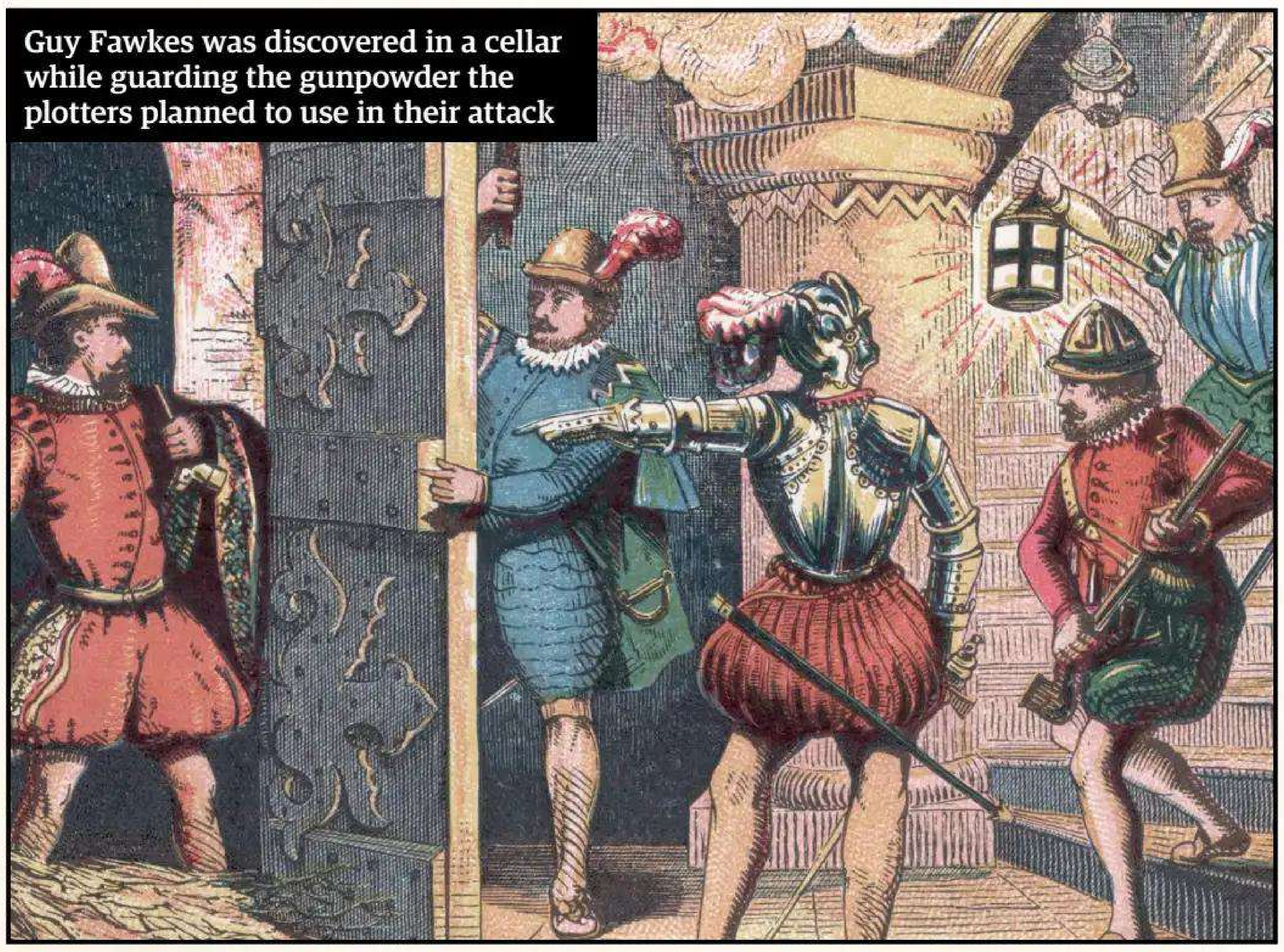
GUY FAWKES

The man who became the face of the Gunpowder Plot was chosen for his expertise in the handling of explosives

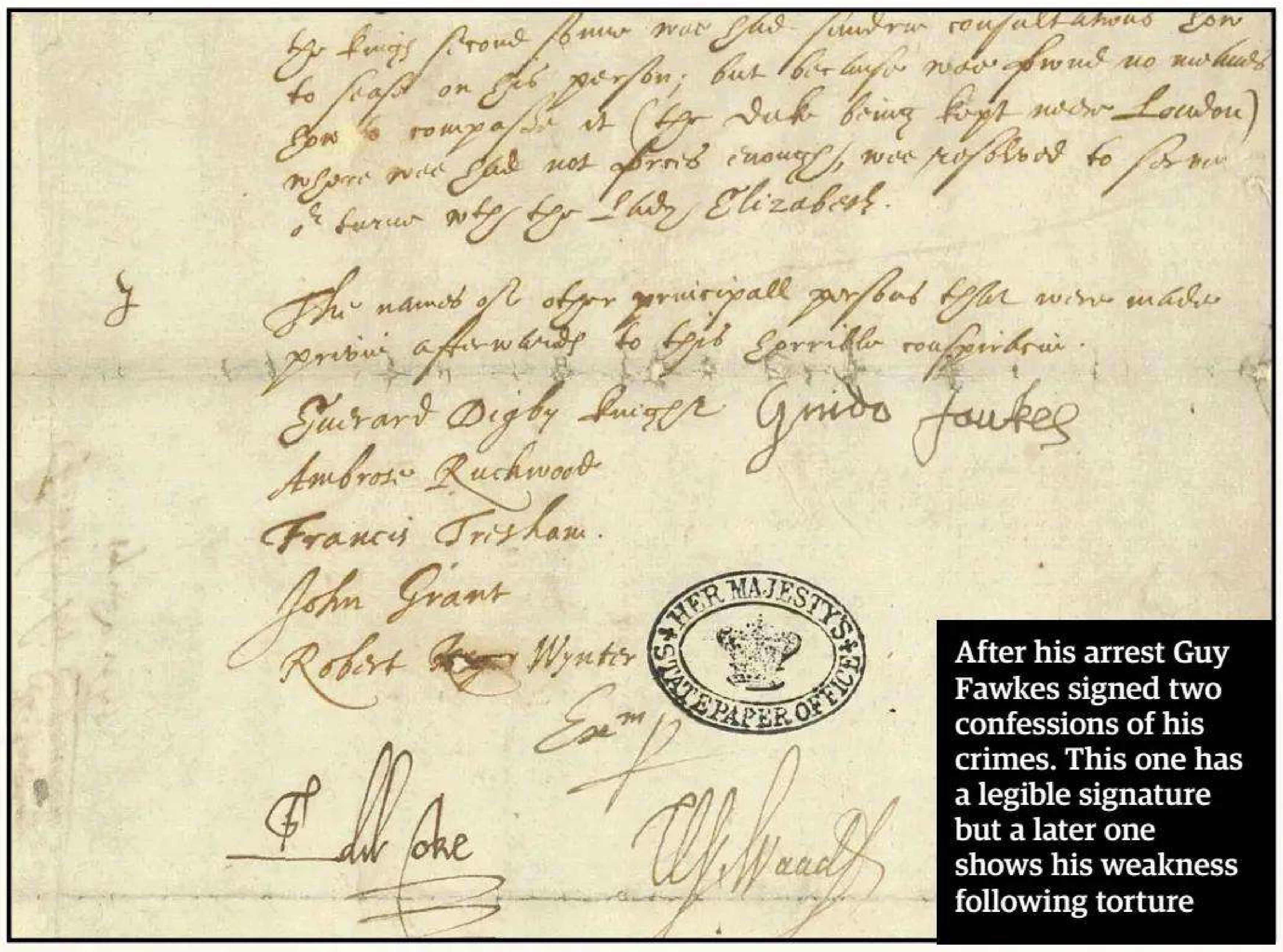
Guy Fawkes' family was an example of how England had been divided between Protestantism and Catholicism. His father's family regularly attended the Church of England while his mother's were Catholic recusants. After his father died Fawkes' mother married a Catholic and this seems to have influenced his conversion.

In 1591 Fawkes sold his property to join English Catholics fighting on the side of Spain against Dutch rebels. There he prospered in the army and rose through the ranks. His experiences also gave him a talent for handling gunpowder. After his service he travelled to Spain in 1603 seeking Spanish support for a Catholic uprising in England which would drive the 'heretic' James I from the throne. The Spanish authorities refused.

It was at this time that Guy Fawkes met Thomas Wintour, who was also travelling abroad in the hopes of meeting other Catholics willing to rebel. Fawkes was sent as an envoy of the conspirators to Calais, but his movements were followed by English spies. On his return to England he moved gunpowder into a basement under the House of Lords and was set to guard the explosives and light the fuse at the right moment. Authorities had been tipped off about the plot and a search was ordered of all cellars underneath Parliament. That is how Guy Fawkes was discovered and taken away for questioning. At first Fawkes provided a false name, John Johnson, and fake history, but admitted that his plan had been to murder the king and the Scottish nobles who surrounded the throne. Next Fawkes was put under torture to make him tell the truth about the plan. After several rounds of questioning and torture Fawkes started to name those involved. The exact methods of torture are unknown but the effects can be judged by the confession which Fawkes signed. On being arrested Fawkes' signature is firm and assured but after his torture his name is almost illegible on his confession. At trial Fawkes was found guilty of treason and suffered death by being hanged, drawn and quartered. He managed to avoid the worst pains of the punishment by breaking his neck while being hanged, though his body was still mutilated afterwards.



Guy Fawkes was discovered in a cellar while guarding the gunpowder the plotters planned to use in their attack



the kings second sonne wee had sundrie consultacions how
to seaze on his person; but because wee found no meanes
how to compasse it (the duke being kept neere London)
where wee had not forces enough, wee resolved to serve
our turne with the Lady Elizabeth.

The names of other principall persons that were made
privie afterwards to this horrible conspiracie.

Everard Digby knight
Ambrose Ruckwood
Francis Trisham.
John Grant
Robert Wynter
Esqre

Guido Fawkes

Edw Coke

W. Waad

HER MAJESTY'S STATE PAPER OFFICE

After his arrest Guy Fawkes signed two confessions of his crimes. This one has a legible signature but a later one shows his weakness following torture

Born:
13 April 1570
Died:
31 January 1606
Occupation:
Soldier
Planned role:
Guard the gunpowder
Fate:
Executed

Image Sources ✱ Getty Images, Adobe Firefly

Born:
c. 1570

Died:
30 January 1606

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Gather supplies and horses

Fate:
Executed

JOHN GRANT

Selected for his Catholic faith and well-located home, Grant was one of the few people injured by gunpowder in the Gunpowder Plot

Norbrook House in Warwickshire was ideally placed as a staging post for the rebellion that was planned after the successful execution of the Gunpowder Plot. Its owner, John Grant, was a well-known Catholic sympathiser too. His home had been used to hide Catholic priests from authorities and Grant was known to scare Catholic-hunters away if they dared to search his estate.

Grant had several links to the other members of the plot. He married Dorothy Wintour, sister of Thomas and Robert Wintour. In 1601 Grant, like several of the plotters, was involved in the failed rebellion led by the Earl of Essex. It was in 1605 that Catesby invited Grant and Robert Wintour to meet him where, after swearing an oath to keep anything they heard secret, they were informed of the plan to kill the king. Norbrook was to be used to store the weapons and horses that the plotters would require to launch their revolt in the Midlands. It was also conveniently close to Warwick Castle, where the plotters hoped to seize more horses and supplies. Grant was to remain outside London while the plot was put into effect. On the eve of the explosion Grant met with the hunting party arranged by Everard Digby. Once the plot was uncovered and Fawkes arrested, Grant and the other conspirators led a raid on Warwick Castle where they captured horses. For the next two days they rode widely across the Midlands looking to raise a rebellious force, but few wanted to join with failed traitors. They also stole gunpowder and money from homes they passed. It was at Holbeche House where the conspirators were drying their gunpowder in front of a fire when it ignited - Grant was blinded. When the house was surrounded by a force led by the Sheriff of Worcester on 8 November those conspirators who remained in Holbeche were besieged. In the attack to seize them a number were killed, but the injured Grant was easily captured and taken away to the Tower of London. When charged with high treason Grant entered a plea of not guilty. Grant was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. When led to the scaffold Grant was the only one of the conspirators to refuse to accept guilt for his actions before suffering the pains of execution.

John Grant was part of the raiding party that seized horses and supplies from Warwick Castle before being captured

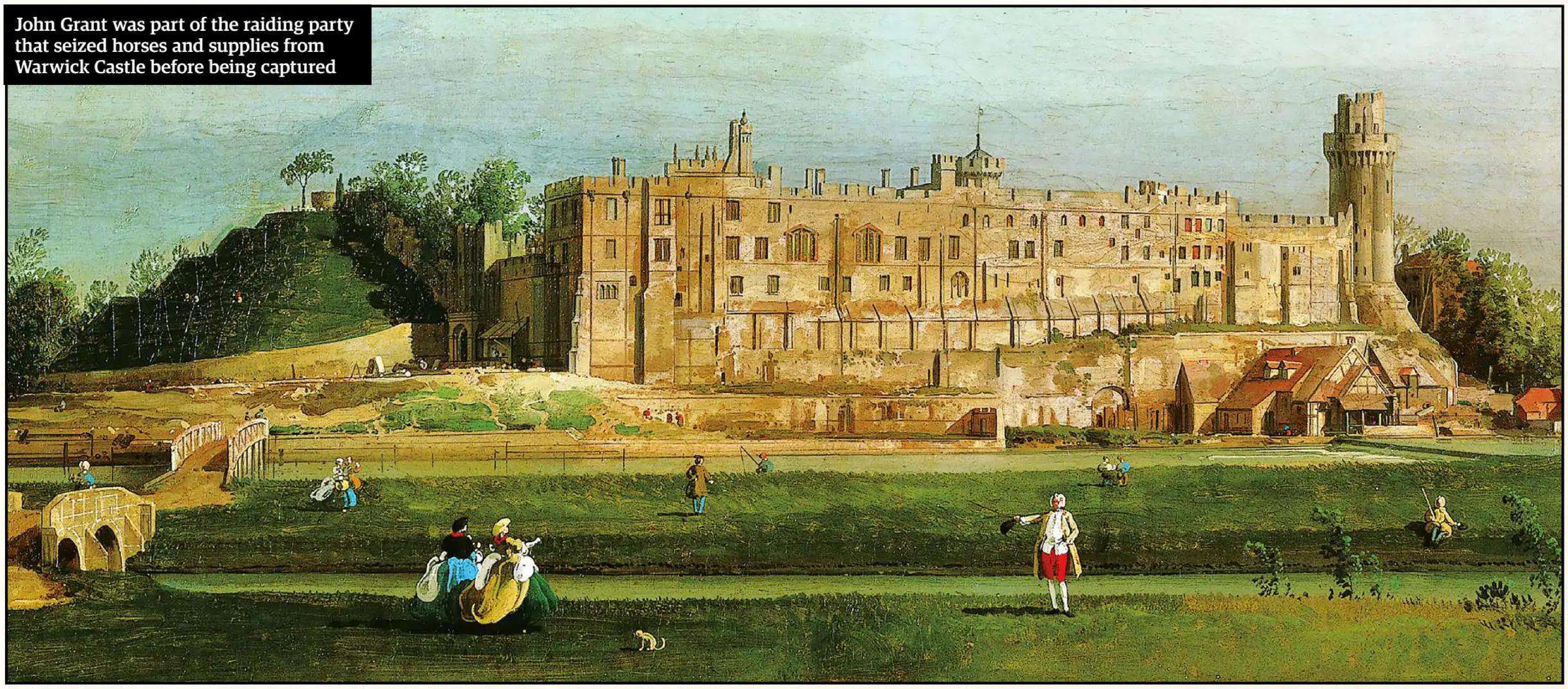


Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

THOMAS PERCY

The well-connected royal guard whose Catholic beliefs turned him against King James I and into a conspirator

Thomas Percy was one of the most aristocratic of the gunpowder conspirators, being related to the powerful Earls of Northumberland. It was through this connection that Percy was appointed as the constable of Alnwick Castle where he was in charge of collecting rents from the Earl's tenants. It cannot be said with any certainty when Percy became a Catholic but in 1591 he married Martha Wright, sister of the future conspirators Christopher and John Wright.

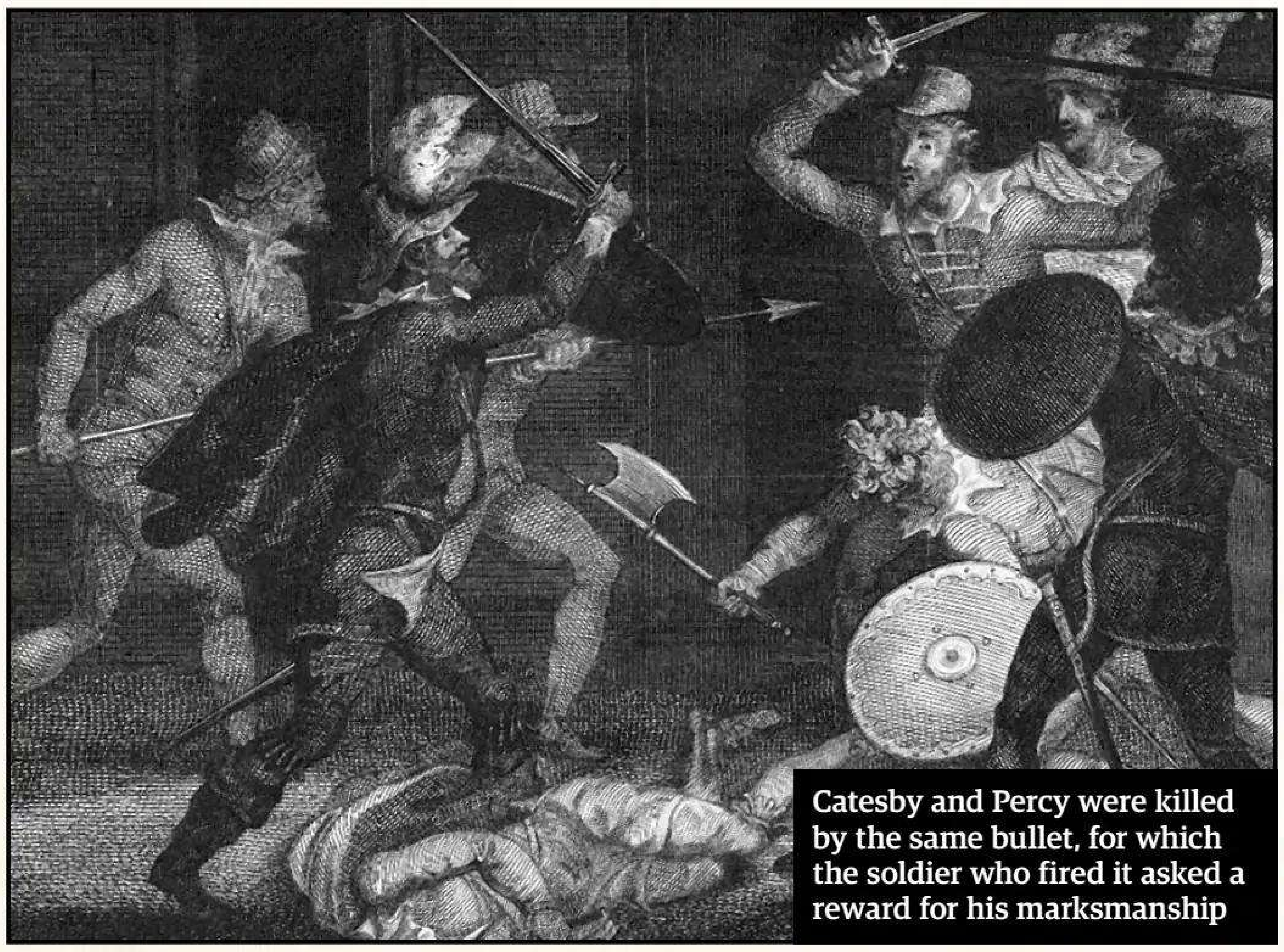
While acting as constable Percy was not well-liked by those he dealt with. He also proved to be unreliable, dangerous and always ready to fight. At some point he abandoned his wife and child. In 1596 Percy became involved in a border skirmish with the Scottish and killed a man, for which he was placed in prison.

It was only thanks to his important aristocratic connections that he was released. When the Earl of Northumberland wished to sent secret messages to the future James I he used Thomas Percy to carry them. It seems that James may have given Percy hope that Catholics would prosper when he came to the English throne. In this Percy was to be disappointed as James continued the anti-Catholic policies of Elizabeth I. At one point Percy grew so enraged that he declared to Robert Catesby he was willing to murder James with his own hands. Catesby urged him to wait and in 1604 introduced Percy to the plot.

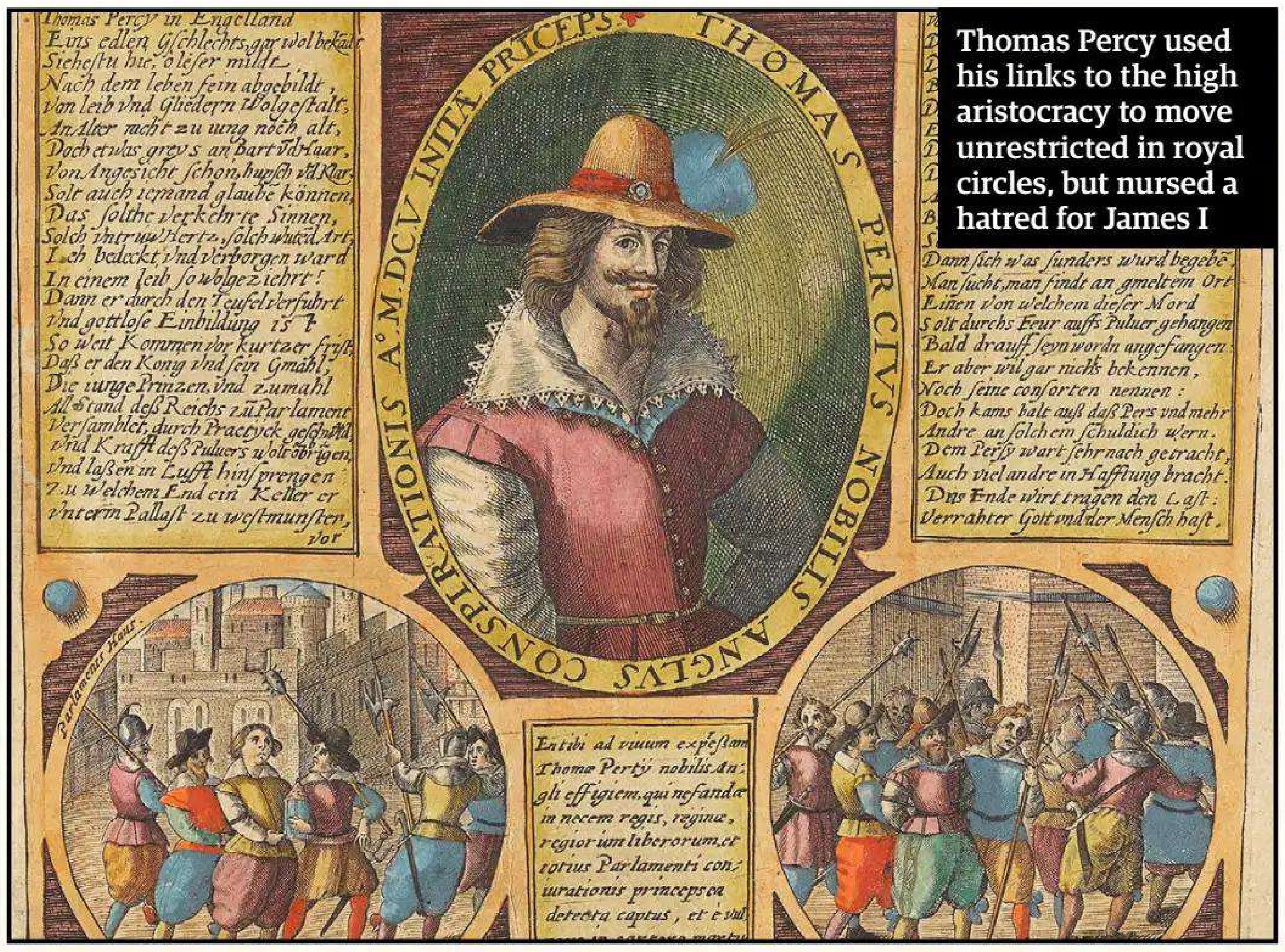
That same year James I appointed Percy as one of his Gentleman Pensioners - one of a group of minor nobles who acted a personal bodyguards to the monarch. This provided Percy with an excellent excuse to set up a home in London where he lodged Guy Fawkes as his servant under an assumed name. It was Percy who rented the cellar under Parliament. Percy was able to mix with the nobility to discover what, if anything, had been revealed about the plot.

When the plot was uncovered Percy fled with the conspirators to the Midlands and went with them to Holbeche House.

When government forces surrounded the house Percy was resolved to fight them, and with the other plotters entered the courtyard. There Percy was shot and killed by the same musket ball which felled Catesby. Afterwards his head was cut off and placed on a spike near Parliament.



Catesby and Percy were killed by the same bullet, for which the soldier who fired it asked a reward for his marksmanship


Thomas Percy in Engelland
THOMAS PERCIVS NOBILIS ANGLVS CONSPIRATIONIS A° M.DCV INITÆ PRICEPS.

Thomas Percy used his links to the high aristocracy to move unrestricted in royal circles, but nursed a hatred for James I

Thomas Percy

Born:
c. 1560

Died:
8 November 1605

Occupation:
Gentleman

Planned role:
Arrangement of logistics

Fate:
Shot

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

Born:
c. 1565

Died:
31 January 1606

Occupation:
Property manager

Planned role:
Guard the gunpowder

Fate:
Executed

ROBERT KEYES

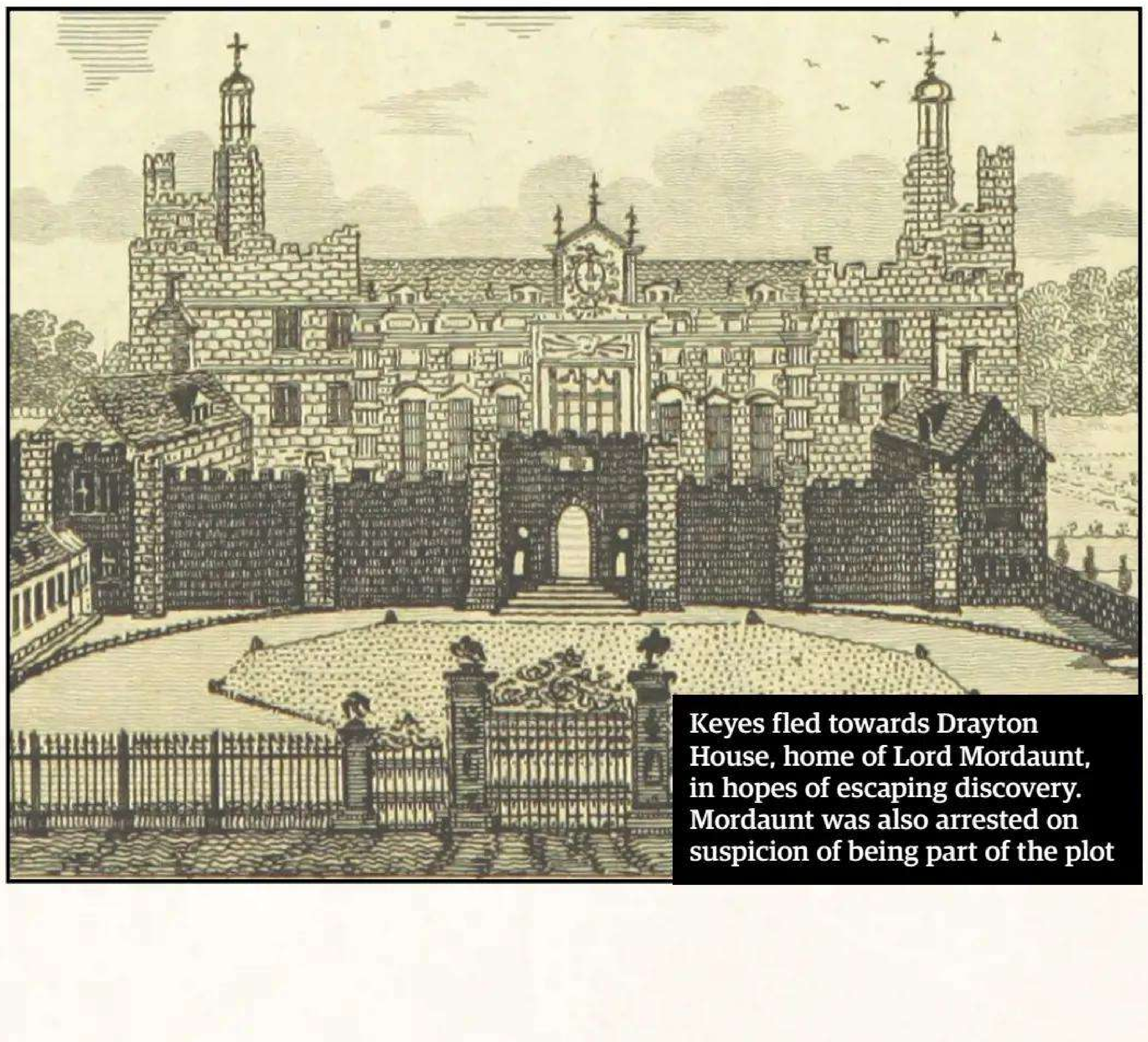
The tough character chosen to help guard the gunpowder who wanted to warn his lord about the attack on Parliament

While most of the conspirators came from wealthy families, Robert Keyes was born of relatively humble stock. His father was a Church of England clergyman and Keyes was presumably raised in that faith. Keyes' mother was from a recusant Catholic family and it may have been through them that he was converted to Catholicism. Keyes' link to the plotters was that his cousin married Ambrose Rookwood.

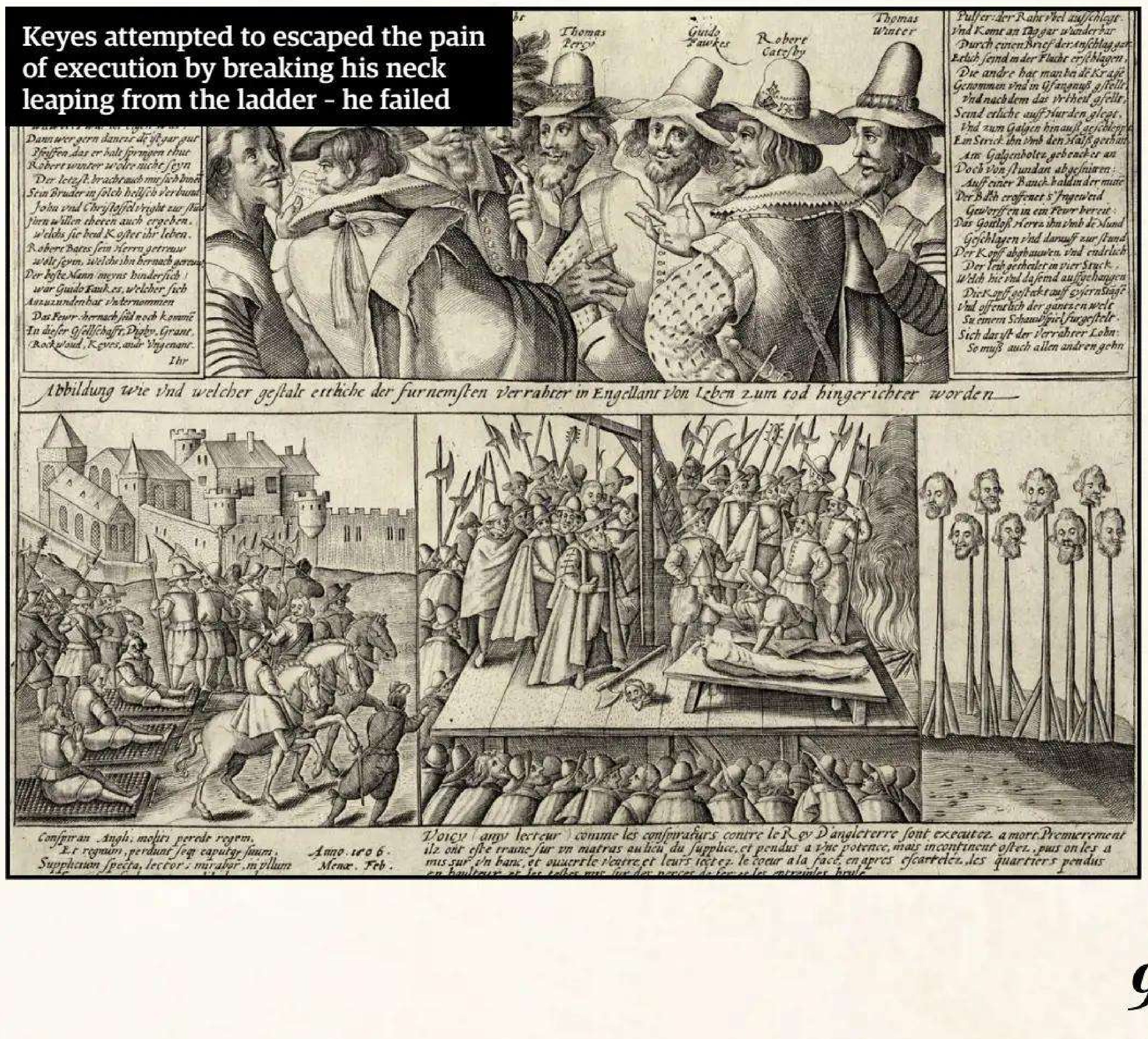
Keyes had to work for a living to earn money and it seems he worked as the property manager for Baron Mordaunt. In this role he had access to horses and other supplies which would prove to be of interest to the plotters. The woman Keyes married was acting as the governess for the baron's children. How Keyes was selected to join the Gunpowder Plot is unknown but in 1604 he was invited by Catesby. It was later said that Keyes was considered to be a tough character but with enough intelligence to be useful. Keyes was set to guard the supplies of gunpowder that Catesby was storing in his home. Keyes was one of the conspirators who had qualms about killing so many lords, several of them Catholic, when the House of Lords exploded. He suggested that they warn Lord Mordaunt about the planned attack but Catesby refused to hear of this because of the risk of discovery.

On the night before the planned explosion Keyes was with Ambrose Rookwood when their co-conspirator Guy Fawkes visited to pick up a watch he would use to time the explosion. When Fawkes was discovered hours later, Keyes left London to ride to the other plotters. On the road he diverted towards the estates of Lord Mordaunt apparently in hopes of hiding from authorities. This plan to escape detection failed and he was arrested on 9 November.

At the trial which followed Keyes entered a plea of not guilty but his only defence was that he took part in the plot to free England of the tyranny it was living under. He also said that he would rather die than suffer any longer under oppression. Keyes was sentenced to death. When he climbed the ladder to be hanged Keyes attempted to leap down to break his neck - but the rope broke. Keyes was dragged to be quartered very much alive.



Keyes fled towards Drayton House, home of Lord Mordaunt, in hopes of escaping discovery. Mordaunt was also arrested on suspicion of being part of the plot



Thomas Percy
Guido Fawkes
Robert Catesby
Thomas Winter
Abbildung wie vnd welcher gestalt etliche der furnemsten verrahter in Engellant von Leben zum tod hingerichtet worden

Keyes attempted to escaped the pain of execution by breaking his neck leaping from the ladder - he failed

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

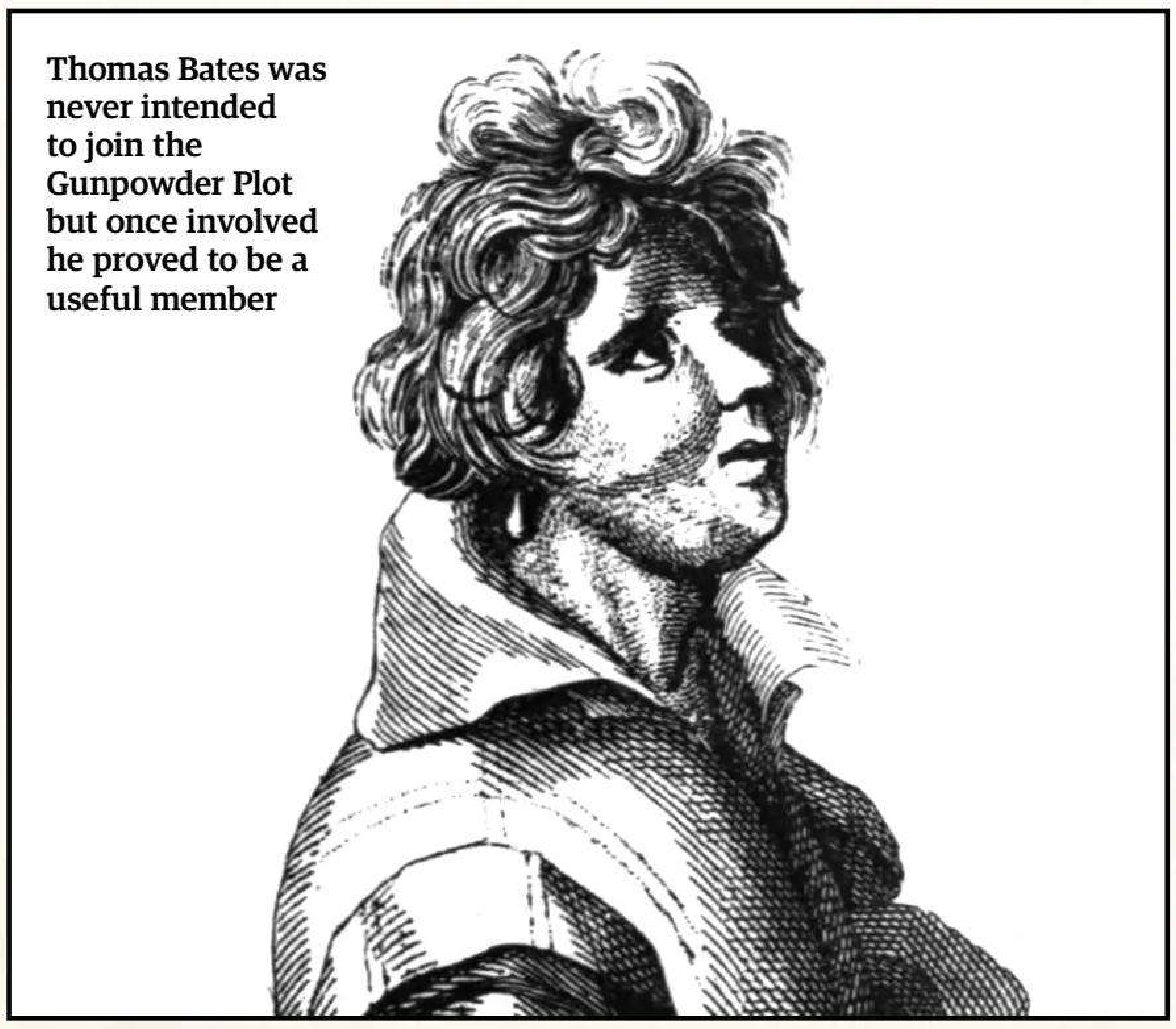
THOMAS BATES

The retainer of Robert Catesby who became an accidental conspirator when he stumbled on the plot

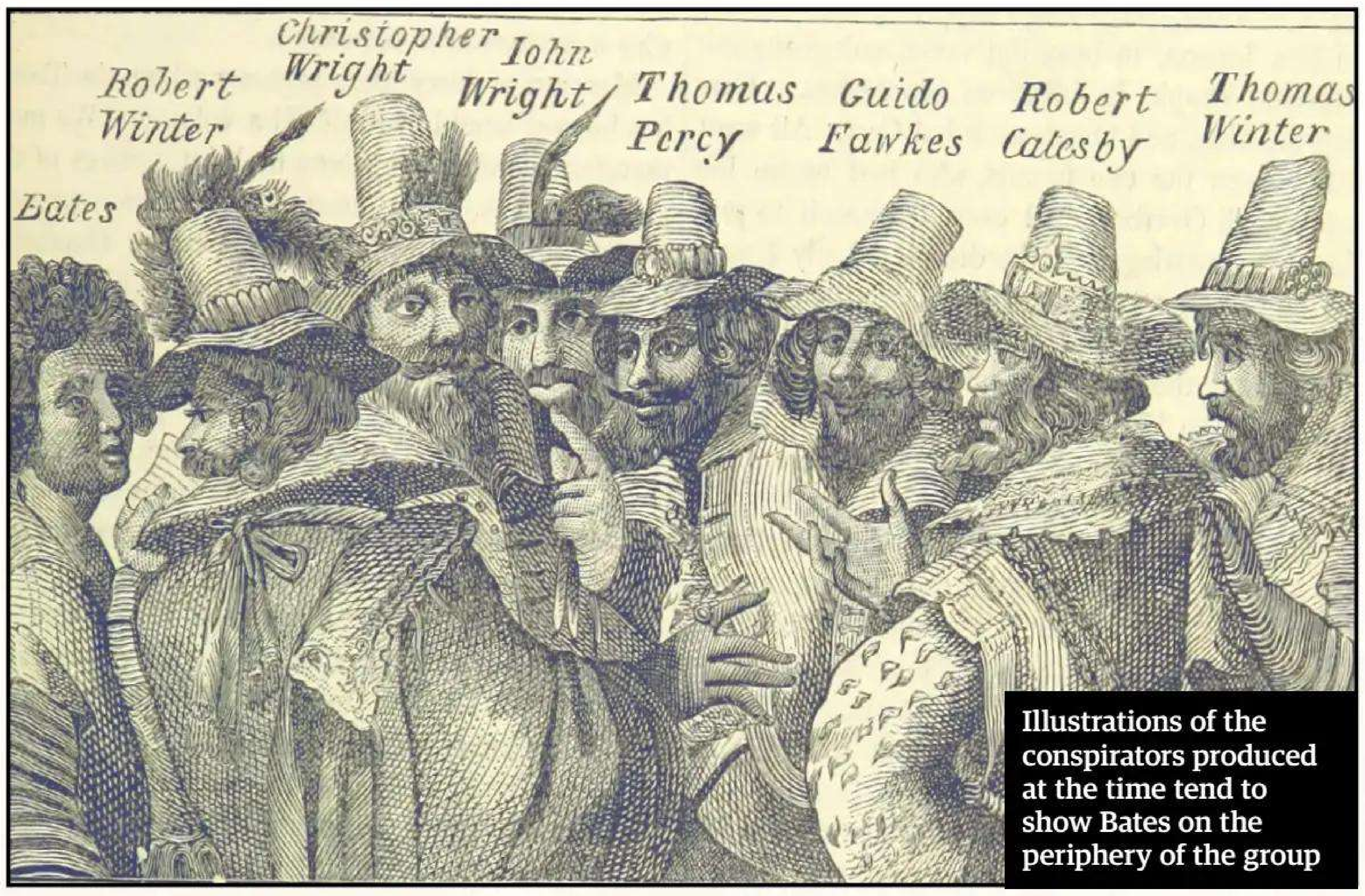
Thomas Bates was a retainer for Robert Catesby, meaning he was a paid attendant and lived on Catesby's estate. This was not a position in which he did menial house chores but rather fulfilled tasks his master required. It may be that Bates was in charge of selling cattle. Bates prospered in this role, had his own suit of armour, and was able to support a wife and children.

To keep the Gunpowder Plot a secret Catesby chose not to inform his household as far as possible. Yet Catesby relied on Bates to carry out various jobs for him which related to the plot. When Catesby noticed Bate's suspicions in December 1604 he called Bates in to find out what he knew. Bates revealed that he thought a plan was being hatched involving something at Parliament. To maintain secrecy Catesby forced him to swear an oath and informed him of the details of the plot.

Bates proved to be an asset to the conspiracy as he was able to do things as a relatively humble man which the wealthier plotters could not. Bates was used to help transport the supplies for the attack without attracting attention. He also proved to be a sensible advisor – Bates was against introducing new members to the plot to help keep it secret. Catesby, needing money, ignored this advice and invited others. Bates accompanied Catesby when he left London on the eve of the attack to ride towards the Midlands to raise a rebellion. When they learned that the plot had been revealed, Bates was among those who stole fresh horses from Warwick Castle. He was also sent to deliver messages to Jesuit priests to inform them of what had occurred. The priests were not impressed. When the conspirators waited in Holbeche House, Bates left before the house was surrounded by men searching for them. Christopher Wright gave Bates £100 and told him to deliver it to Wright's family. Bates was soon arrested and interrogated, where he claimed that the Jesuits were involved in the plot. Unlike the better-born conspirators, Bates was held in Gatehouse Prison rather than the Tower of London. Some claim he attempted to bribe his captors with the £100. Neither the money or his implicating other Catholics saved Bates from being hanged, drawn and quartered though.



Thomas Bates was never intended to join the Gunpowder Plot but once involved he proved to be a useful member



Illustrations of the conspirators produced at the time tend to show Bates on the periphery of the group

Thomas Bates

Born:
c.1567

Died:
30 January 1606

Occupation:
Retainer

Planned role:
Assist Robert Catesby

Fate:
Executed

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Adobe Firefly

Born:
c.1578

Died:
31 January 1606

Occupation:
Horse breeder

Planned role:
Provide horses
and gunpowder

Fate:
Executed

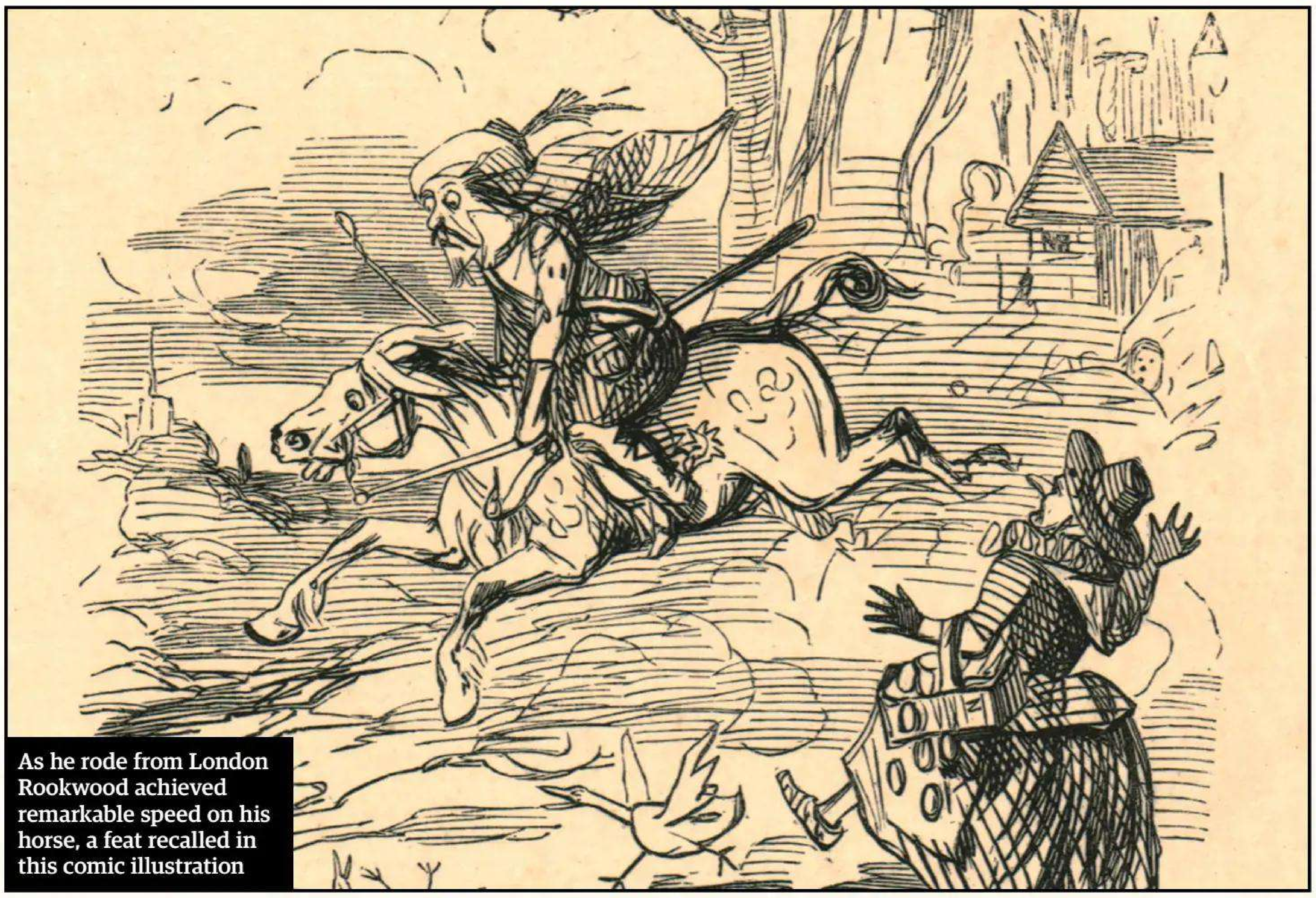
AMBROSE ROOKWOOD

The wealthy young man, and devoted Catholic, who was tapped to provide fast horses for the plot

The Rookwood family of Stanningfield was an ancient and wealthy one, and was staunchly Catholic. Several members of the family were fined and imprisoned for recusancy – refusing to attend Church of England services. When Ambrose Rookwood was young he was sent to Flanders with his brothers to be educated at a Catholic seminary. Ambrose inherited his father's estate in 1600 and he used his wealth to develop an impressive stable of fast horses. He also provided support for Catholics. Ambrose married Elizabeth Tyrwhitt, who was also from a prominent Catholic family, and it was through her he became related to fellow plotter Robert Keyes. Rookwood was motivated to join the plot when approached by Robert Catesby thanks to his deeply rooted Catholic faith and the belief that Catholics were suffering under the rule of James I. As part of the plot he would provide the horses that the conspirators would ride as they fled from London to the Midlands to raise a rebellion. He also supplied gunpowder. Rookwood rented a house in Stratford-upon-Avon where the plotters could operate. When the plot was uncovered and the first arrests made, Rookwood lingered just long enough to gather news of what was happening in London. Then he used his famous horses to race towards the Midlands to inform the others of what had occurred. Rookwood's home was searched and his Catholic items seized.

Rookwood was now a wanted man. The escaped plotters sought to gather weapons and support, but few people were willing to join with or assist traitors. While fleeing with supplies their gunpowder became wet, and they attempted to dry it in front of a fire when they rested at Holbeche House. This proved to be a mistake. In the resulting explosion Rookwood was slightly injured. He remained behind while others fled, and was captured.

Rookwood was sent to the Tower of London. At his trial he asked for mercy but this was refused. On 31st January 1606 Rookwood and three of his co-conspirators were dragged to the place of execution. As Rookwood passed his home he called out to his wife to ask her to pray for him. Before being hanged Rookwood gave a speech, begging God to bless the royal family, but the crowd turned against him when he also asked God to turn the king Catholic. Reports from the time say Rookwood's death was apparently quite prolonged.



As he rode from London Rookwood achieved remarkable speed on his horse, a feat recalled in this comic illustration

Image Source ✱ Getty Images, Adobe Firefly

FRANCIS TRESHAM

An unreliable ally and constant intriguer, he failed to provide the support that he promised and may have revealed the conspiracy

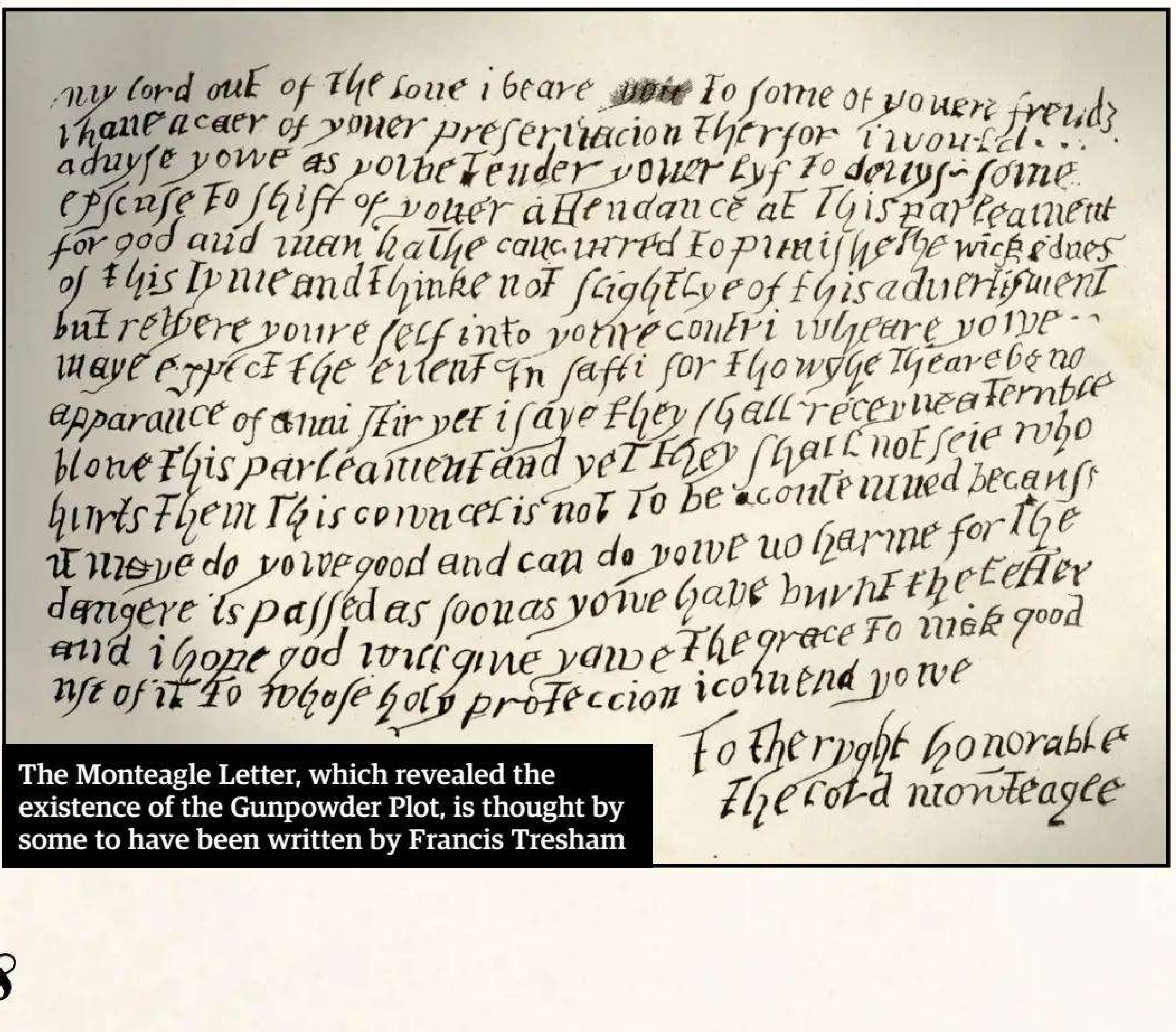
Francis Tresham was witness to the difficulties which Catholics faced under Elizabeth I. His father refused to take part in Church of England worship and was fined vast sums of money for his recusancy, and even imprisoned. Francis himself seems to have been arrested at the time of the Spanish Armada and may have been held alongside Robert Catesby.

Throughout his life Francis Tresham became involved in various ill-planned schemes and violent actions. At one point he was arrested for ransacking the home of a man who owed him money, and beating the man's daughter. When the Earl of Essex attempted to rebel against Queen Elizabeth in 1601, Tresham was one of the dashing young men who took part, alongside Ambrose Rookwood and Robert Catesby. Only the payment of large bribes secured Tresham's freedom. This experience did not stop Tresham being involved in Robert Wintour's intrigues with the Spanish.

His support of Catholicism and his willingness to join conspiracies made Tresham a natural choice to participate in Catesby's plot. Yet Tresham was known to be unstable, so he was only invited late into the plot when the conspirators needed money. Tresham's father had recently died and so he now had full control of the family estate. Even in this he proved unreliable, and failed to provide the cash that he'd promised to the plotters.

On 26 October one of Tresham's brothers-in-law, Baron Monteagle, received a cryptic letter warning him to stay away from Parliament. Many have conjectured that Tresham wrote this letter. When Catesby heard of the letter he threatened to kill Tresham, but was finally convinced of his innocence. Tresham seems to have attempted to convince the other plotters to give up the plan and flee, but the conspirators went ahead. The letter meanwhile came into the hands of Robert Cecil and led to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.

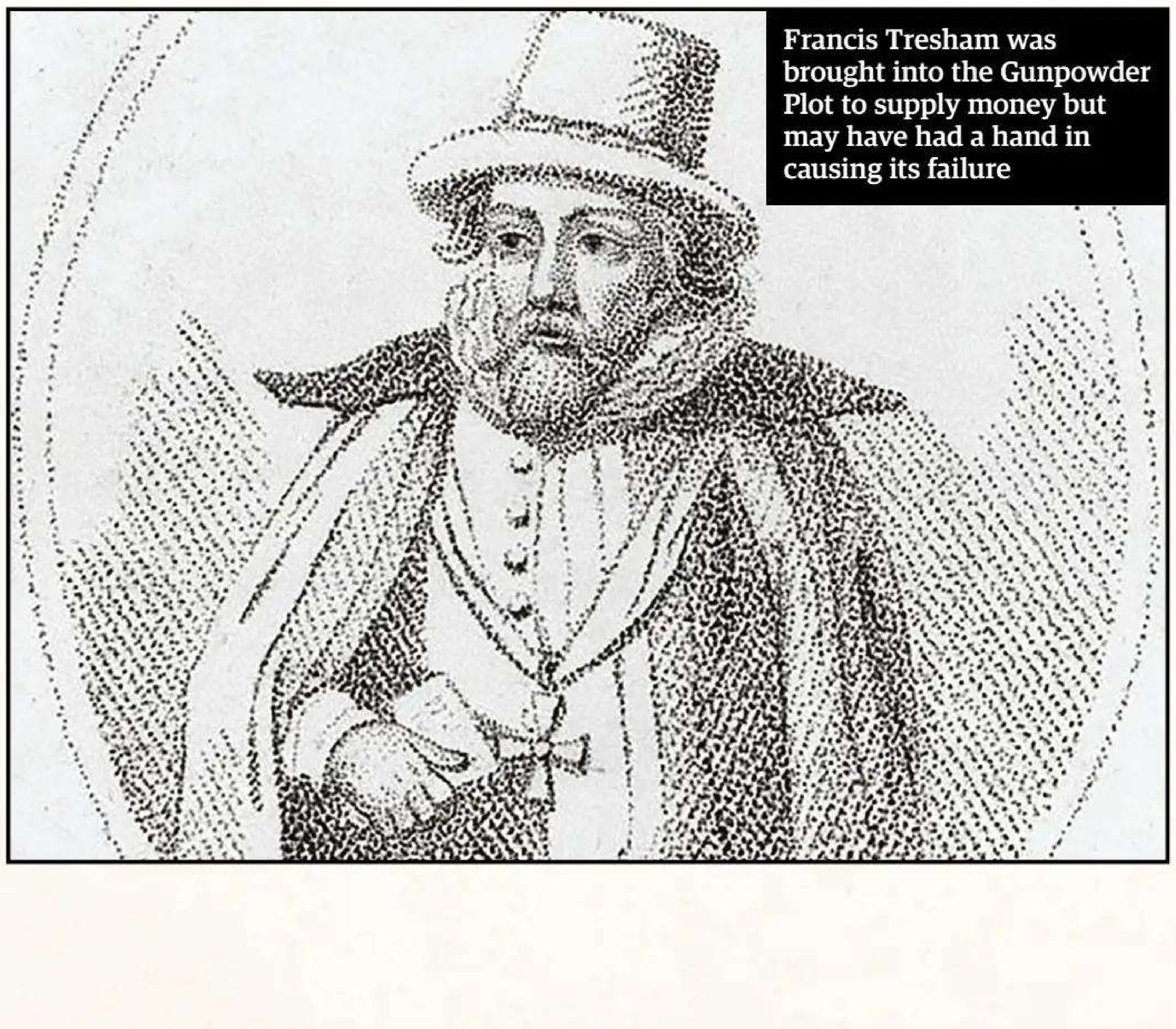
When other conspirators fled London in the wake of the failure, Tresham remained in the capital and was soon arrested. He was sent to the Tower of London. Having been captured so soon Tresham was quickly questioned and gave various defences of his actions. At first he claimed his only crime was his failure to reveal the plot. Next he admitted he had worked with Wintour on earlier treasons. But Tresham would never face trial, as he died in his cell of a urinary tract infection.



my lord out of the love i beare ~~uow~~ to some of youere frends
i have a caer of youer preservacion therfor i would
advyse yowe as yowe tender youer lyf to devyse some
excuse to shift of youer attendance at this parleament
for god and man hathe concurred to punishe the wickednes
of this tyme and thinke not slightlye of this advertisment
but retyere youre self into youre contri wheare yowe
maye expect the event in safti for thowghe theare be no
apparance of anni stir yet i saye they shall receyve a terrible
blowe this parleament and yet they shall not seie who
hurts them this cowncel is not to be contemned because
it maye do yowe good and can do yowe no harme for the
dangere is passed as soon as yowe have burnt the letter
and i hope god will give yowe the grace to mak good
use of it to whose holy proteccion icomend yowe

To the ryght honorable
the lord monteagle

The Monteagle Letter, which revealed the existence of the Gunpowder Plot, is thought by some to have been written by Francis Tresham



Francis Tresham was brought into the Gunpowder Plot to supply money but may have had a hand in causing its failure

Francis Tresham

Born:
c.1567

Died:
23 December 1605

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Supply money

Fate:
Died of illness

Image Sources ● Getty Images, Adobe Firefly

Born:
c. 1578

Died:
30 January 1606

Occupation:
Landowner

Planned role:
Supply money, raise rebellion

Fate:
Executed

EVERARD DIGBY

The dashing young Catholic convert who was supposed to help raise a rebellion in the wake of the plot

Everard Digby was born into a wealthy family with no strong ties to Catholicism; they were certainly never punished for refusing to attend Anglican services.

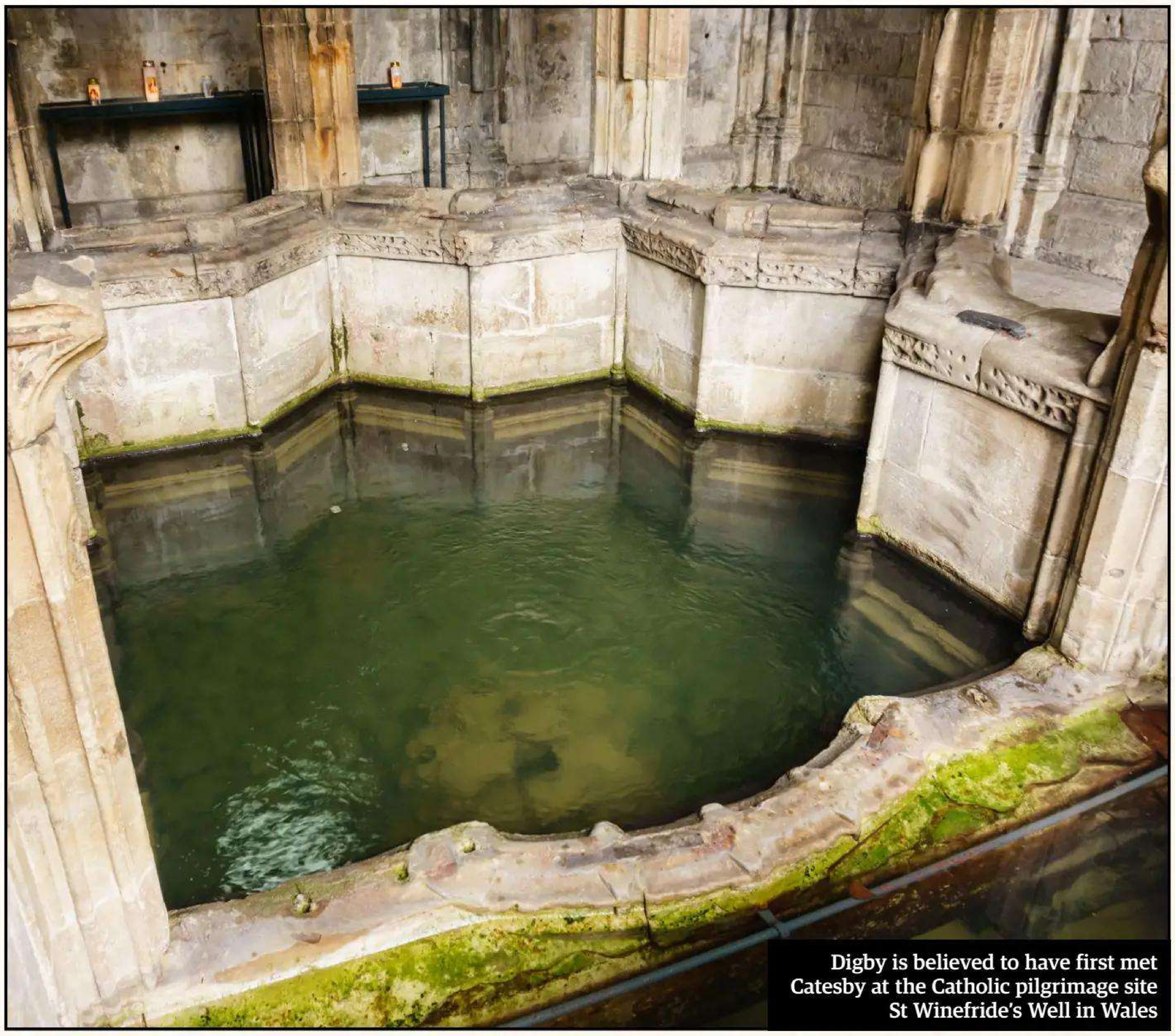
As a young man Digby was raised as the ward of a Protestant family and seemed set to live the life of a conforming gentleman of leisure. He was introduced to the court of Elizabeth I and took part in the feasting, hunting, and revelry there while showing no interest in the politics. He attracted notice only for his wit, horsemanship, and dashing appearance. In 1599 Digby was introduced to a secret Catholic priest called John Gerard who surreptitiously taught him Catholic teachings.

Over time the two became great friends and Gerard converted Digby's wife Mary to Catholicism, later succeeding with Digby himself. Digby turned his home into a Catholic stronghold and constructed a concealed chapel there for private worship. The full extent of Digby's involvement in the Gunpowder Plot is difficult to judge as Digby wrote letters later that boasted of how he had lied to authorities after his arrest. Digby was knighted by King James I and might have expected to rise further under the new monarch. But in 1605 Robert Catesby met Digby and introduced him to the plot. Digby was chosen in part because his wealth was necessary to pay off debts incurred by the other plotters. Some of Digby's money was used to rent a house in Warwickshire where the plotters could seize and hold Princess Elizabeth once the rest of the royal family was killed.

Next Digby was told to set up a hunting party nearby, which seems to have been cover to gather a group of men who would support the planned uprising. After the plot was foiled Catesby arrived at the hunting party and informed them that the king had been killed, hoping to spark a rebellion. Digby had failed to tell his guests his plans for them and none chose to join the rebels. Instead the conspirators fled to Holbeche Hall but Digby realised the plot had failed and surrendered to forces sent to capture them.

At trial Digby was the only plotter to plead guilty to the charges, but he was not spared. He was taken to the place of execution, stripped to his shirt, and briefly hanged. Once cut down he was castrated and disembowelled while still alive.

"Digby turned his home into a Catholic stronghold"

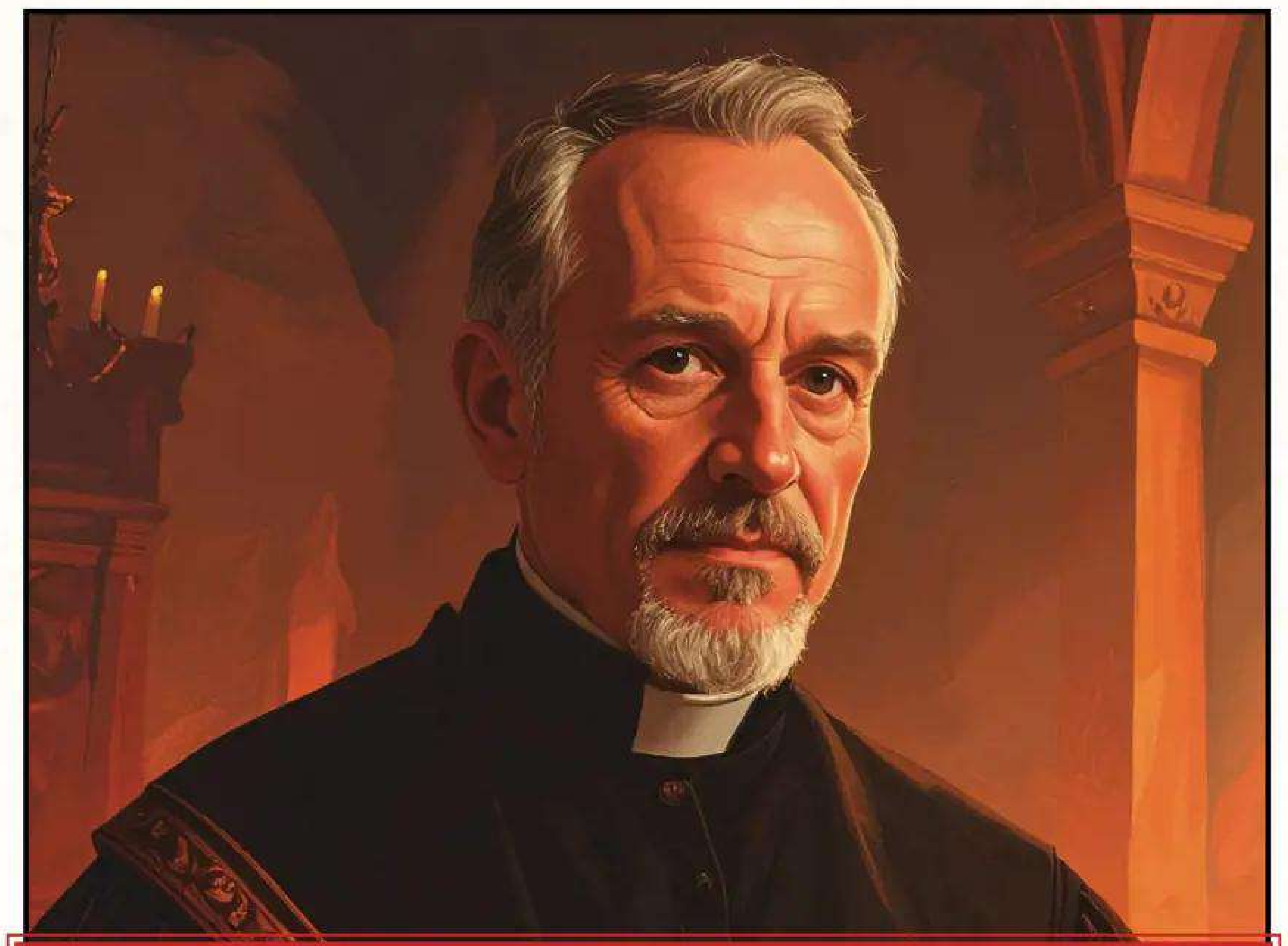


Digby is believed to have first met Catesby at the Catholic pilgrimage site St Winefride's Well in Wales

Image Sources • Adobe Firefly

TARNISHED BY ASSOCIATION

Alongside the main conspirators, several other men were implicated in the plot. Their infamy has followed them through the centuries



Henry Garnet

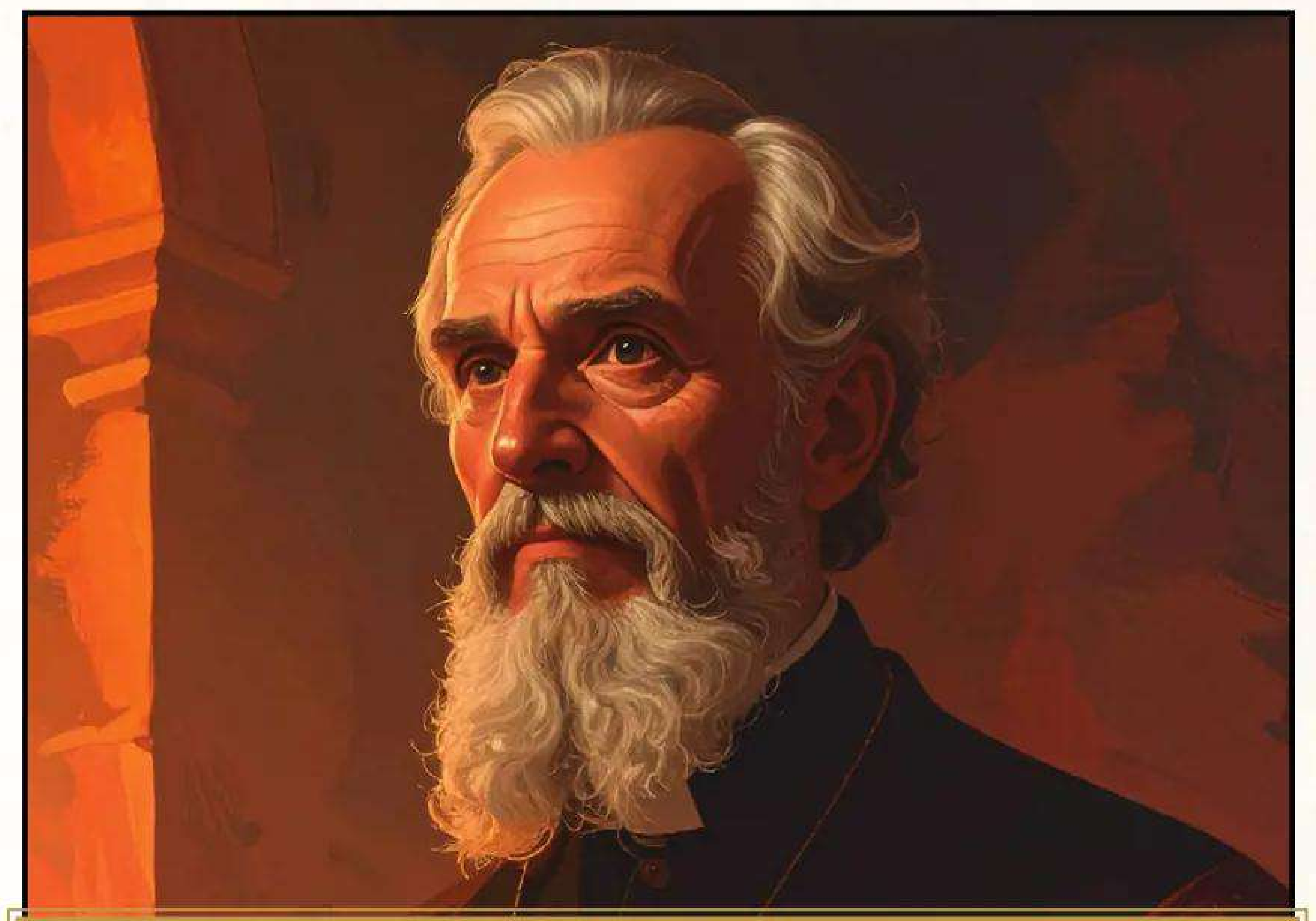
Born:
July 1555

Died:
3 May 1606

Occupation:
Priest

Fate:
Executed

Jesuit priest Henry Garnet had often beseeched Catholics not to seek a regime change by violence. Though he knew Robert Catesby, he was ignorant of the Gunpowder Plot until Father Oswald Tesimond revealed its existence to him during his confession in July 1605. Bound by the seal of the confessional, Garnet didn't inform authorities, but instead pleaded with Catesby not to go through with the attack. When the plot failed, Garnet went on the run due to his close ties to the plotters. He was eventually arrested and interrogated, before being found guilty of high treason.



John Gerard

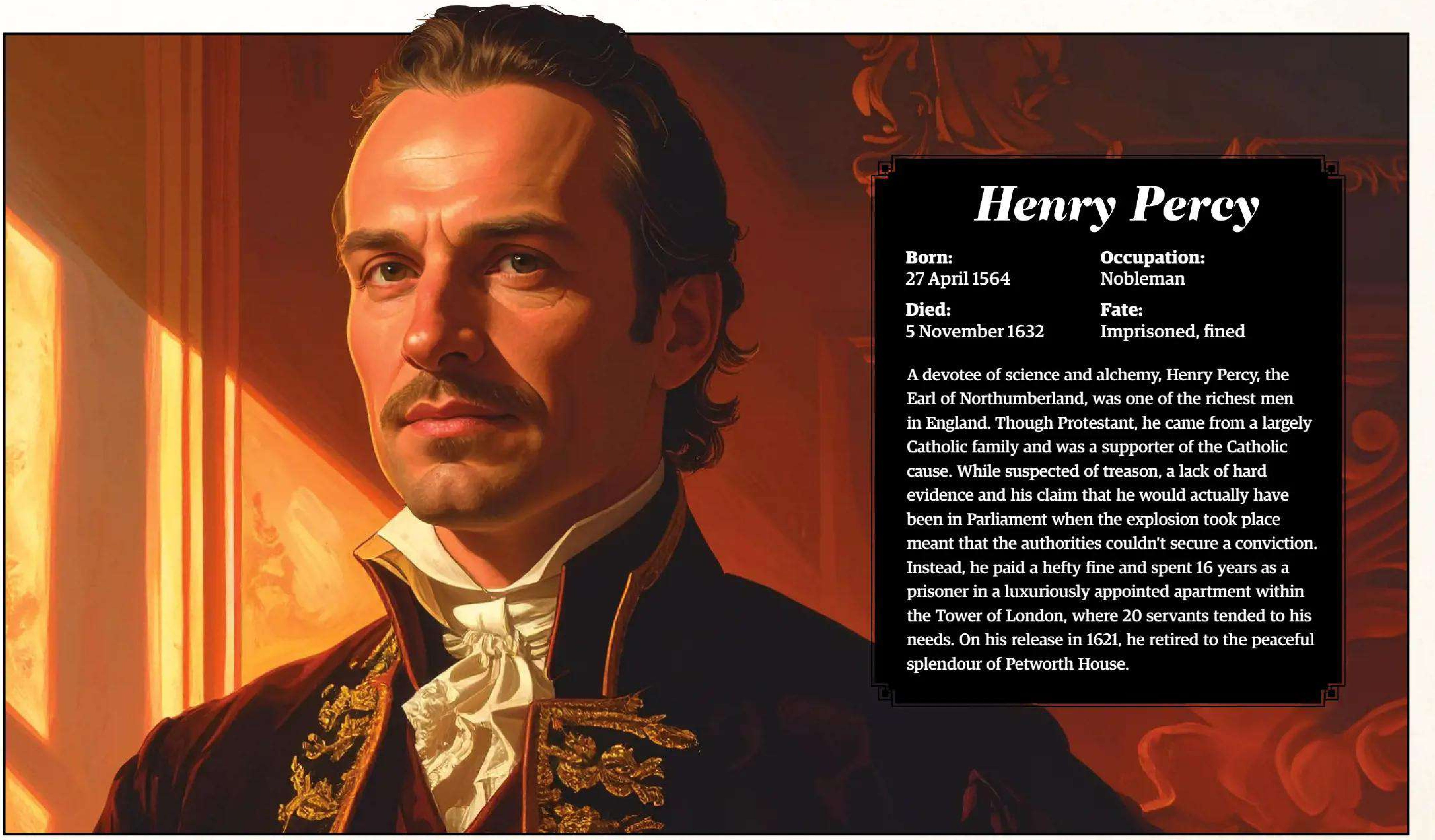
Born:
4 October 1564

Died:
27 July 1637

Occupation:
Priest

Fate:
Fled

John Gerard was a Catholic priest who was well known to the authorities, having already made an audacious escape from the Tower of London in 1597, after suffering agonising torture. Though Gerard was friends with some of the Gunpowder Plotters, he was not involved in the plot itself. However, once Catesby's servant, Thomas Bates, implicated Gerard in the plot, the priest went into hiding with Henry Garnet and Oswald Tesimond. He wrote a declaration of innocence and had it distributed in London, before he fled the country in disguise, as a member of the entourage of the ambassadors of Flanders and Spain.



Henry Percy

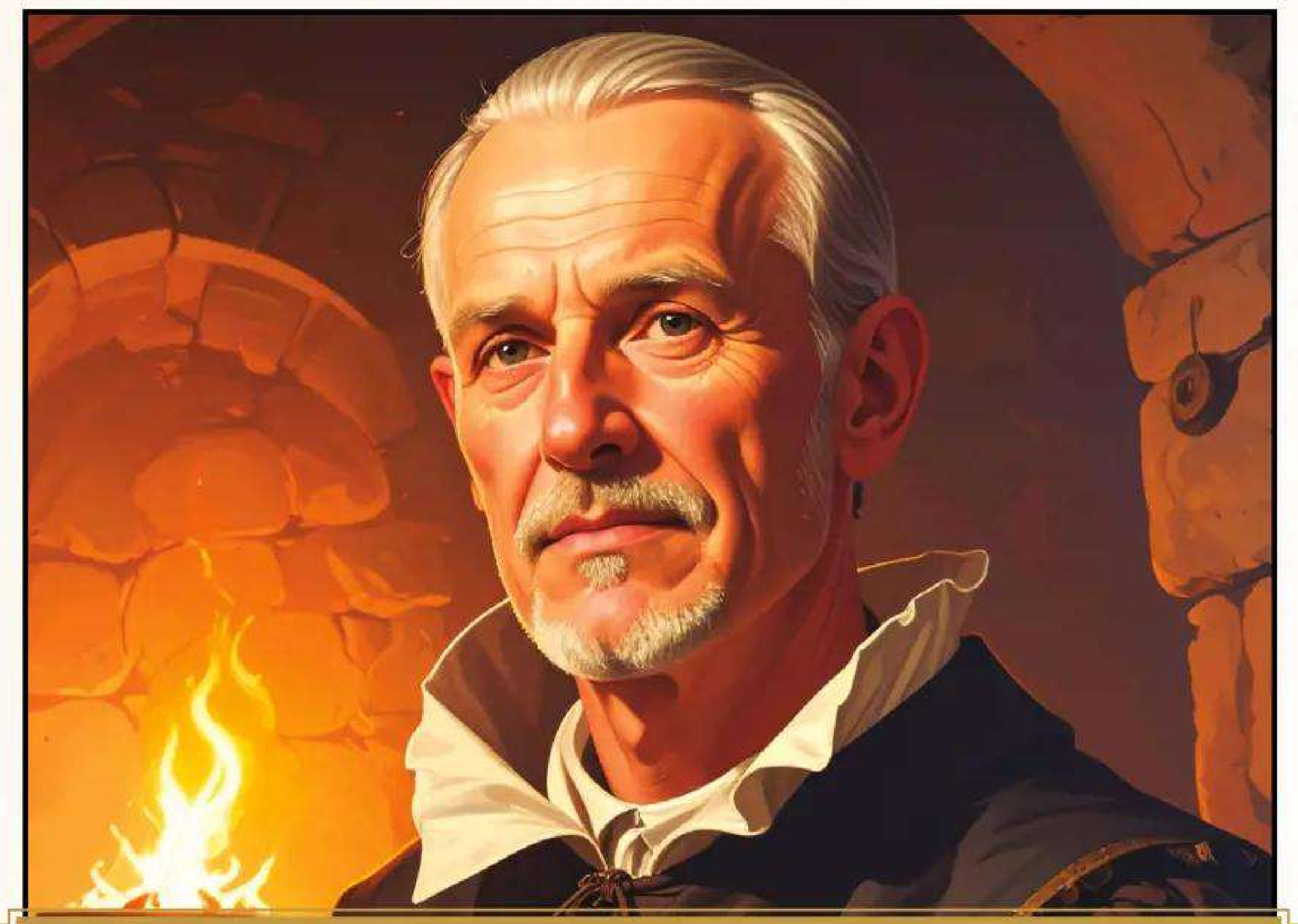
Born:
27 April 1564

Occupation:
Nobleman

Died:
5 November 1632

Fate:
Imprisoned, fined

A devotee of science and alchemy, Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, was one of the richest men in England. Though Protestant, he came from a largely Catholic family and was a supporter of the Catholic cause. While suspected of treason, a lack of hard evidence and his claim that he would actually have been in Parliament when the explosion took place meant that the authorities couldn't secure a conviction. Instead, he paid a hefty fine and spent 16 years as a prisoner in a luxuriously appointed apartment within the Tower of London, where 20 servants tended to his needs. On his release in 1621, he retired to the peaceful splendour of Petworth House.



Oswald Tesimond

Born:
1564

Died:
1632

Occupation:
Priest

Fate:
Fled

Oswald Tesimond met Guy Fawkes at school in York, before training to be a priest. Robert Catesby revealed the existence of the Gunpowder Plot to him when he sought moral guidance on the collateral killing of innocents. Misunderstanding the question, Tesimond assumed Catesby was referring to fighting for his country, but later realised later that was not the case. Tesimond discussed the matter with Henry Garnet, who urged him to plead with Catesby not to go through with the plan. When a warrant for his arrest was issued, Tesimond fled to France, disguised as the owner of a cargo of slaughtered pigs.

Stephen Lyttelton

Born:
1575

Died:
1606

Occupation:
Gentleman

Fate:
Executed

Stephen Lyttelton was from a Catholic family and had relatives who had been involved in the Earl of Essex's uprising. He believed that Robert Catesby's plan was to raise an army to fight in Flanders; he had little knowledge of the real plot, but was caught up in the plotters' fateful escape attempt and last stand because he lived in Holbeche House. Consequently he was convicted and executed along with them.

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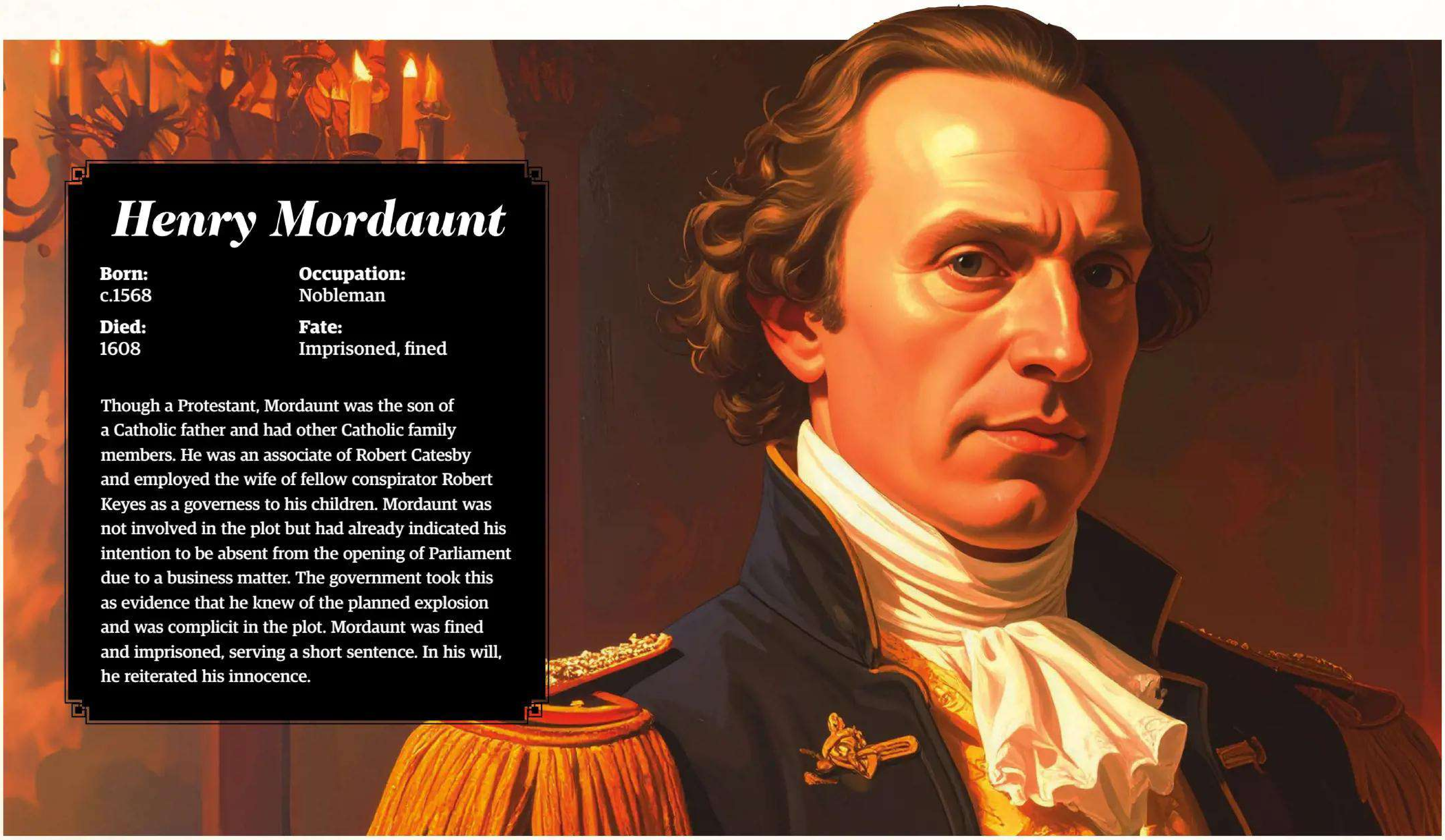


Henry Mordaunt

Born:
c.1568

Died:
1608

Occupation:
Nobleman

Fate:
Imprisoned, fined

Though a Protestant, Mordaunt was the son of a Catholic father and had other Catholic family members. He was an associate of Robert Catesby and employed the wife of fellow conspirator Robert Keyes as a governess to his children. Mordaunt was not involved in the plot but had already indicated his intention to be absent from the opening of Parliament due to a business matter. The government took this as evidence that he knew of the planned explosion and was complicit in the plot. Mordaunt was fined and imprisoned, serving a short sentence. In his will, he reiterated his innocence.

Edward Stourton

Born:
c.1555

Occupation:
Nobleman

Died:
7 May 1633

Fate:
Imprisoned, fined

As a Roman Catholic and good friend of Robert Catesby, it was inevitable that suspicion would fall on Edward Stourton. He was married to the sister of conspirator Francis Tresham, and Catesby had even recruited Tresham at Stourton's London home. When Guy Fawkes told his interrogators that Stourton would not be present at the infamous opening of Parliament, this was taken as evidence of his complicity. Despite Stourton's protests that his absence in London was the result of his wife's illness rather than any knowledge of the conspiracy, he was fined and imprisoned. Stourton was released in 1608.

Humphrey Lyttelton

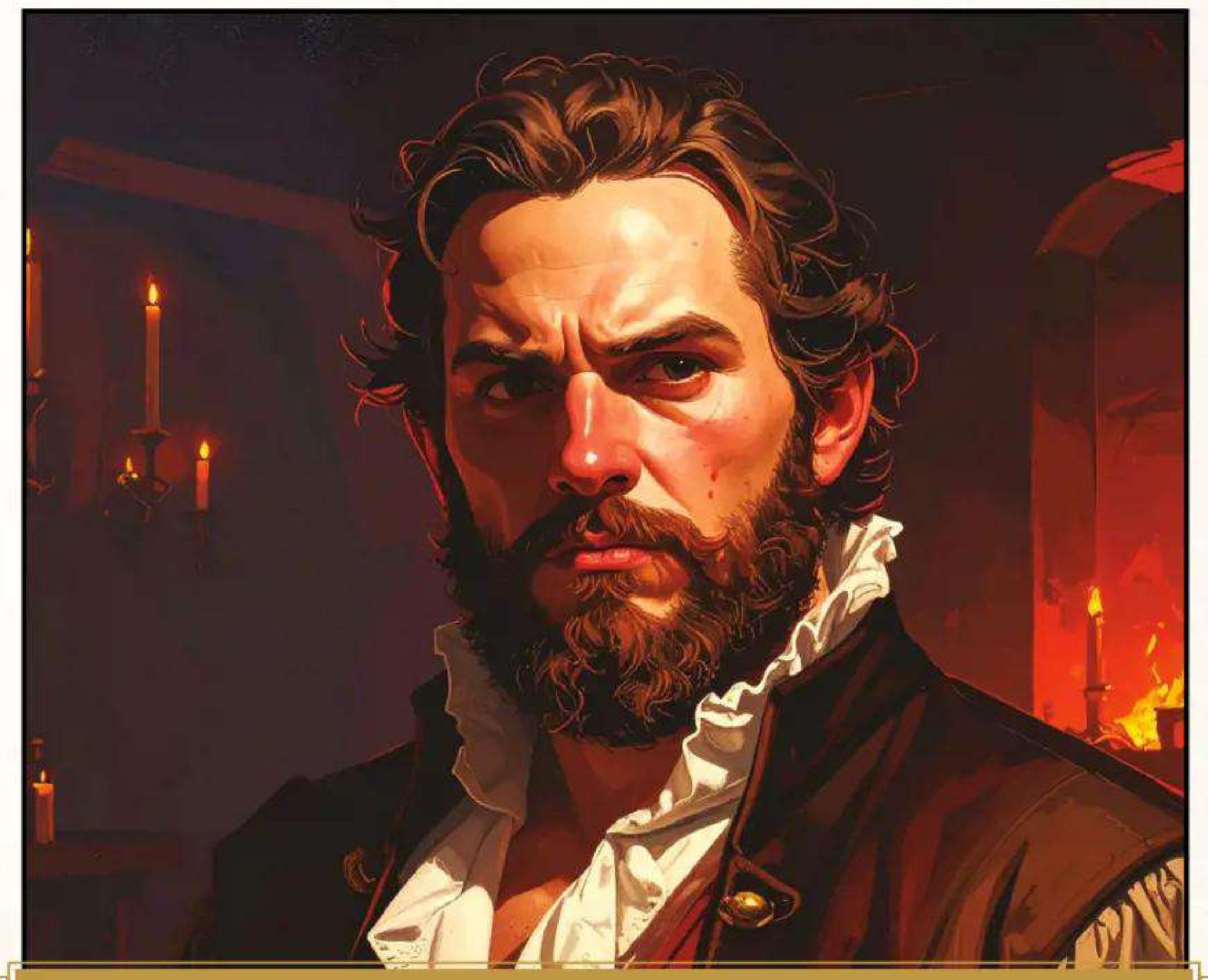
Born:
1576

Died:
1606

Occupation:
Gentleman

Fate:
Executed

Humphrey Lyttelton was Stephen's uncle (he was one of the eight sons of Sir John Lyttelton, and younger than his nephew), and like him believed that Catesby was raising a regiment, in which he'd promised one of Humphrey's illegitimate sons a commission. When he hid his fleeing nephew Stephen and plotter Robert Wintour from the authorities, his fate on the scaffold was sealed. He also implicated Edward Oldcorne.



Edward Oldcorne

Born:
c1561

Died:
1606

Occupation:
Priest

Fate:
Executed

And old school friend of several of the plotters, including Guy Fawkes, little evidence apart from his long association with many of the plotters convicted Oldcorne, who maintained his innocence even under torture. Executed with the others, he is considered a martyr in the Catholic Church and has been beatified on his way to possible sainthood. A Catholic priest at the time of his death, he originally trained as a doctor.

Image Sources • Adobe Firefly

GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT

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Image Sources ✱ Adobe Firefly

THE PLOT IN ACTION

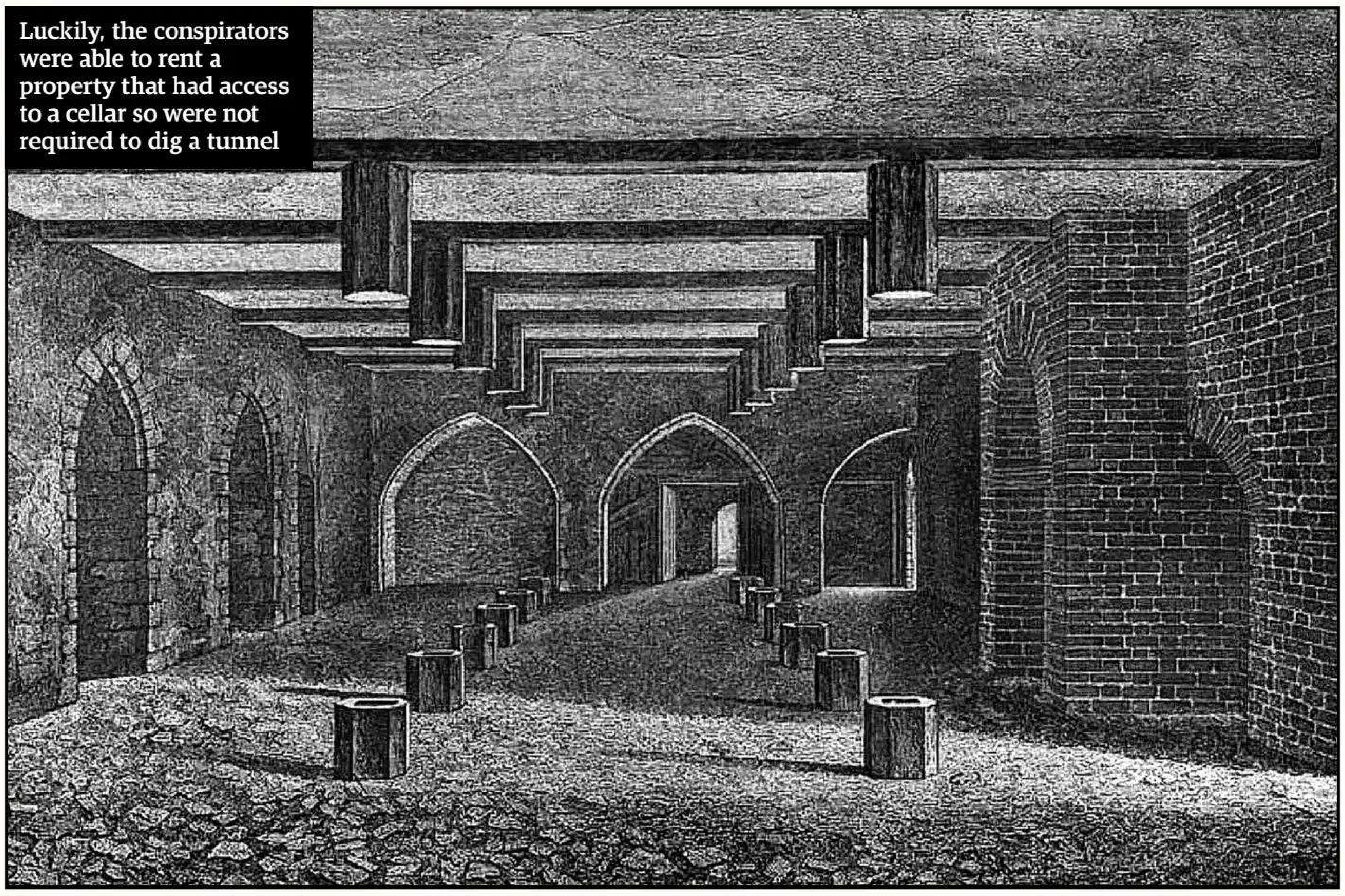
The Gunpowder Plot was no spur of the moment concoction, it was a detailed scheme that was meticulously planned

It's 20 May 1604 and five men are sitting in the Duck and Drake pub on the Strand, London. They have hired a private room and a Bible sits on the table. These men are discussing a plan that would change not only their lives, but those of everyone living in England, Catholic or Protestant.

Robert Catesby, Guy Fawkes, Thomas Wintour, John Wright, and Thomas Percy are united in their goal to blow up the Houses of Parliament, killing King James I as well as his wife, Queen Anne of Denmark, and their oldest son and the heir to the throne, Prince Henry. The men agree and swear an oath of secrecy, binding them together. Their futures set, they go their separate ways, intent on committing treason.

The plan was to completely cut the head off the monarchy's power base. The blast would kill many officials from both the House of Commons and House of Lords. In the confusion following the explosion, the plotters would abduct Princess Elizabeth and Prince Charles, who were both only children, with the government left hapless. From here, word would be spread across the continent of the successful plot as the conspirators called the shots behind Elizabeth, the new puppet queen.

The gunpowder that would be used in the treasonous proposal was stored in Catesby's house in Lambeth, across the Thames from Westminster. The initial plan was to tunnel into the Houses of Parliament from below but this would have been tricky. The group instead managed to rent a property adjacent to the House of Lords. This house had a cellar oor undercroft that went below the governing chamber, an ideal place for 36 barrels containing 1.5 tons of gunpowder. These would sit here, hidden under coal and wood, both for secrecy and extra flammability. In the summer of 1605, with the gunpowder in position, the group separated to rally more people to the cause before the day of operation - 5 November 1605 - the day of Parliament's re-opening.

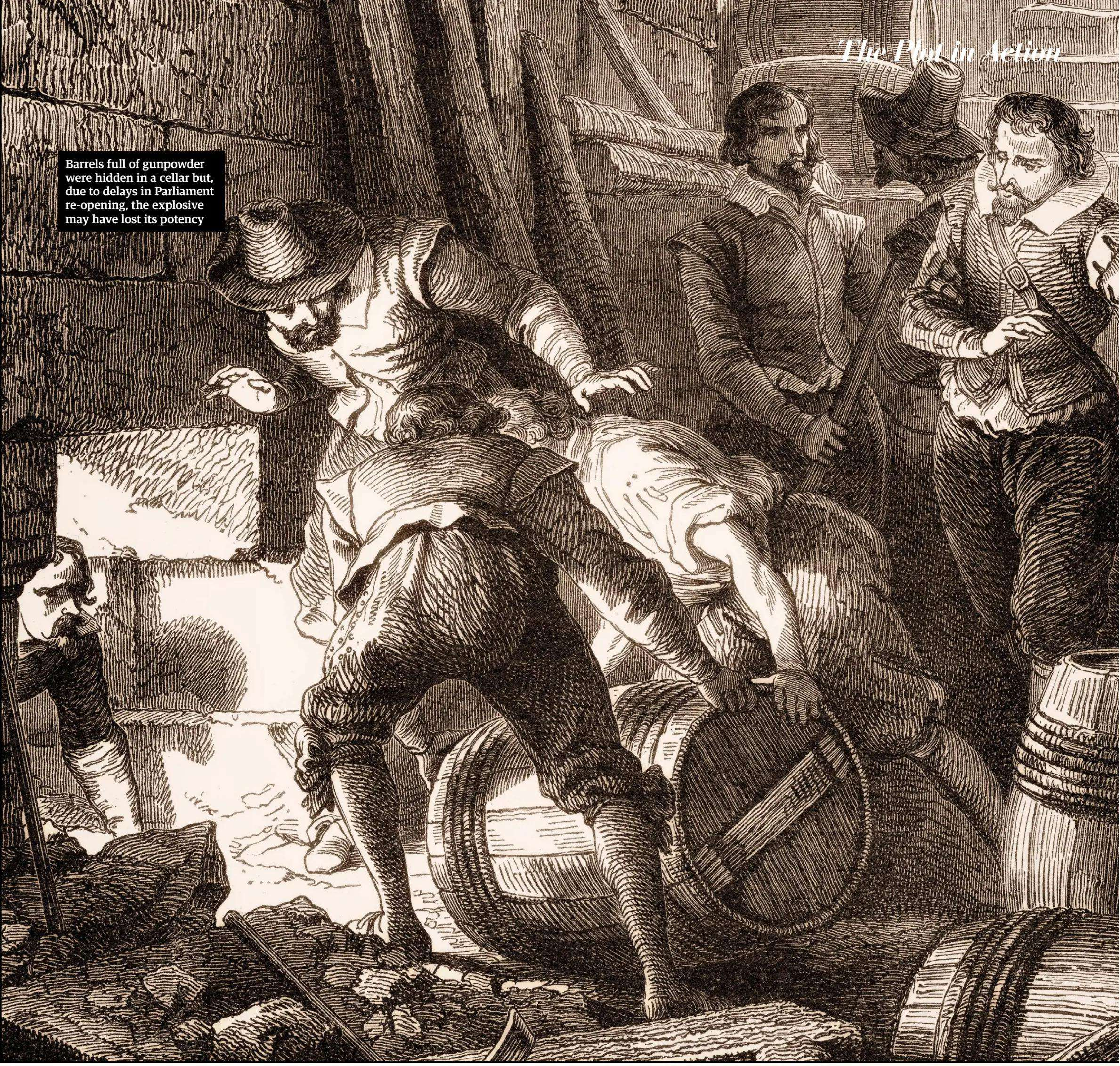


Luckily, the conspirators were able to rent a property that had access to a cellar so were not required to dig a tunnel

The State Opening of Parliament had been delayed a number of times due to plague outbreaks first in February, and then again in October. This meant there was a higher chance of the barrels being spotted and for the gunpowder to decay and become less explosive as the weeks ticked by, if it was unsealed.

Princess Elizabeth wasn't present at the Houses of Parliament on the day of reckoning. She was in the perceived safety of Coombe Abbey in the Midlands, a short ride from where other members of the plot were stationed. After the successful coup, she would be abducted and installed as the first Catholic queen since Mary I, who had reigned half a century before.

Over time, more Catholic nobles pledged their support to the cause. The group was eventually made up of 13 confirmed plotters. Catesby was the architect-in-chief and his natural charisma made him an ideal choice for the plotters' leader. Strongly religious, he coaxed many into the fold thanks to his tenacity and powers of persuasion. He informed others in the group on a need-to-know basis to avoid any leaks. His servant, Thomas Bates, also assisted in the plot as Catesby juggled the balance of having enough allies to complete the assassination, but not too many that the circle of trust became too large. Catesby's motivation



Barrels full of gunpowder were hidden in a cellar but, due to delays in Parliament re-opening, the explosive may have lost its potency

came from the treatment of Catholics in Protestant England in the wake of the Reformation. It's believed that he was further radicalised after the deaths of his wife and his father, both in 1598.

One person outside of the plotters who was aware of what was going to happen was Henry Garnett. He was the head of the Jesuits in England, a Catholic faction, who had been dismayed by the king's lack of support. Garnett and his associates weren't keen on the plot but also did not reveal it. Catesby, in search of religious justification, had confessed his plan to Garnett over dinner.

A close confidant of Catesby was Thomas Percy. A former bodyguard of the king, he had rented the house that was to be used in the plot, having been given the opportunity due to his family links to the Earl of Northumberland. Weapons were provided by John Grant, who stored them in his country house, Norbrook, in Warwickshire. This is where the plotters would hide out and withdraw to. Ambrose Rockwood was another wealthy man drawn into the cause, who had access to fine horses to make an escape upon.

Lord Monteagle was a prominent Catholic. He knew some of the plotters and had previously conspired against the government. He would not be joining this plot though; he had now pledged his allegiance to the king.

Monteagle's brother-in-law, Francis Tresham, did join. He was also Catesby's cousin and had previous form for rebellion and conspiracy – he had been part of the 1601 Essex Rebellion. In the years leading up the plot, he had been in discussions with the Spanish about a possible coup. It would seem, therefore, that Tresham would be fully on board with the plot but he had reservations, concerned that the blast would kill Monteagle, who would be in the House of Lords at the time. The hesitancy went both ways: Catesby didn't believe that Tresham was to be fully trusted – he was notoriously unstable – but invited him into the fold in October 1605 due to his wealth.

Image Sources • Wikipedia

Robert Winour was a cousin of Catesby's. He kept his distance from the other plotters but was brought back into the fold time and again, due to how strong his links were with Catholics across the country. Robert's younger brother was Thomas Wintour, a former soldier and the group's foreign correspondent. He had previously negotiated with the Spanish for military aid. It was Thomas Wintour who, on a trip to Flanders (now in modern-day Belgium), persuaded a certain Guy Fawkes to join the cause.

John and Christopher Wright were another pair of siblings in on the plot. They had attended the same school in York as Fawkes. They had also had previous run-ins with the law and, possibly due to his past behaviour, John was the first person Catesby told about the plan.

Guy Fawkes wasn't the leader of the group, but a vital part of it nevertheless. The Yorkshireman was a Protestant by birth but, aged 23, had joined the Spanish Army. His time abroad meant he was an unknown in England. His role was to light the powder, activating the regicidal blast. Until the fateful November day, Fawkes would live in the house next to the House of Lords, his identity given as that of John Johnson, the house's servant, to prevent any suspicion.

Along with Fawkes, Robert Keyes was another who was tasked with storing and protecting the gunpowder before the fateful day. Keyes came late to the operation and was an extra hand, willing to help.

A number of locations in the Midlands were used in the lead-up to the 5 November for the plotters to rendezvous in and for plans to be hatched. Coughton Court was rented by Everard Digby, the final man to join the cause, as the launchpad for a Catholic uprising after the successful plot and also where Princess Elizabeth would be held, and raised as a Catholic queen. Catesby and Tresham had both spent some time as youths at the house so knew it well. Ashby House was owned by Catesby's mother and it is believed that her son hatched plans with co-conspirators there. Closer to the scene of operation, Catesby also leased a house in Lambeth as both a store and a safehouse.

A few days before the day of the plot, some of the conspirators and their allies' resolve began to waver, none more so than Garnett who sent a message to Catesby, urging him to reconsider. By now in far too deep, Catesby ignored the pleas. Garnett also wrote a letter to the Pope requesting his guidance. He could only be vague in his description so as to not give the game away – the Pope's response, as a result, was similarly ambiguous. This also was not enough to stop Catesby, who actually made an effort to stop any more messages being delivered to the Pope from Garnett, just in case. Garnett made a final play and met with Catesby at a safehouse in the summer of 1605 buthis arguments fell on deaf ears. The mastermind was unmoved and the plot would go ahead on 5 November.

Fawkes was tasked with guarding and setting off the gunpowder due to his expertise with explosives, learned in Europe

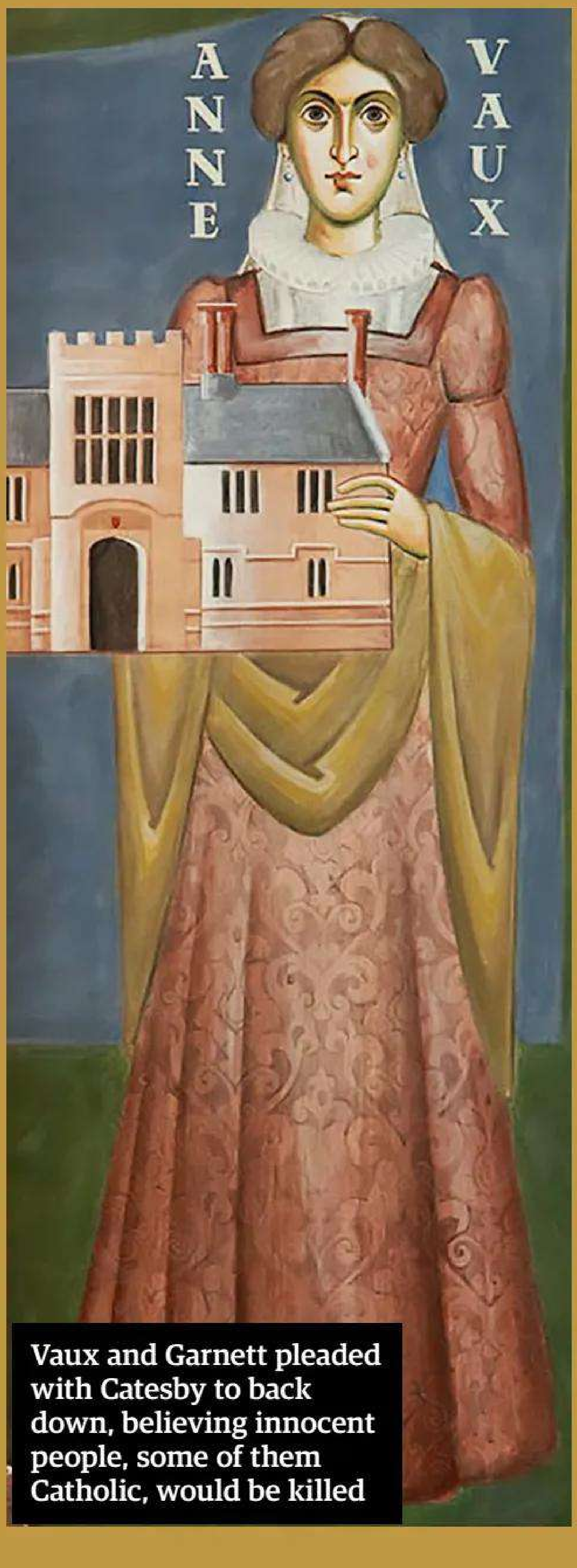
Who was Anne Vaux?

Anne Vaux may not have been one of the 13 plotters but she was a devout Catholic who sheltered persecuted priests in Protestant England. One of the priests she supported was Henry Garnett. Her rationale was that by keeping Garnett safe, he could mentor new Catholic clergy in a post-Reformation world.

During the plot's planning stages, some of the group visited Vaux for guidance or to lay low. Vaux's family were fervent in their Catholicism. Her father racked up a huge debt for refusing to attend mandatory Protestant services and her brother was part of a Catholic underground communications network that helped financially support Catholic priests. After their deaths, Vaux, along with her sister, had carried the baton of her family's faith.

Vaux was Catesby's cousin and she shared his drive to protect Catholics from Protestant persecution. While she undertook a peaceful approach, renting out houses to allow Catholic priests to live, pray and socialise, her cousin took a radical and regicidal approach.

Vaux knew about the plot after being informed of the plan by Digby's wife. It was Vaux who encouraged Garnett to try and convince Catesby to reconsider, but to no avail. The last chance to turn back had been missed.



Vaux and Garnett pleaded with Catesby to back down, believing innocent people, some of them Catholic, would be killed

Image Sources ● Wikipedia CC: Martin Earle, Alamy

Fr Garnet met his execution with such courage and serenity that many people present thought they were watching the death of a saint

CATESBY'S CONFESSION

The plotters were devout and sincere Catholics. They knew the plan put their immortal souls at risk and they sought advice from priests – but then refused to listen to the answers

For non-Catholics, confession is the most mysterious of the Church's sacraments. The penitent disappears into a confessional, kneels on one side of a screen and whispers his sins to the priest, who is concealed on the other side of the screen. The priest, sitting in the dim light of the confessional, hears the accumulated misdeeds of thousands of people during his life. It's a big burden to carry. Surely they must talk about what they've heard? Maybe over dinner in the presbytery, priests gossip a bit - no names, of course, but just to say, "You'll never believe what I heard today?"

They don't. Catholic priests are absolutely required to maintain the confidentiality of what they hear in confession, on pain of their own souls. No matter what pressure or incentives are applied, the priest must never, never, divulge what he has heard under the seal of confession.

Which put Father Oswald Tesimond in a very difficult position when Robert Catesby, during confession, told him of his plan to kill the king by blowing up the Houses of Parliament. However, Fr Tesimond thought fast and asked Catesby if Catesby would give him permission to speak to his superior, Fr Henry Garnet, the head of the Jesuit mission in England, about what Catesby intended to do. Catesby gave Fr Tesimond his permission, but stipulated that Fr Tesimond only do so while confessing to Fr Garnet. Fr Garnet would therefore be bound to keep what Fr Tesimond told him of the plot secret.

Fr Tesimond's confession served to confirm the growing fears that Fr Garnet had been harbouring about what Robert Catesby was planning. On 8 June 1605, over dinner, Catesby had asked Fr Garnet whether it was lawful that some innocent men be killed in pursuit of a greater good. Fr Garnet, thinking Catesby was referring to the classic soldier's quandary, replied that such death might be lawful, but only if such deaths were the alternative to more people dying from inaction.

Hearing Fr Tesimond's testimony, Fr Garnet realised that Catesby's question had been much more pointed than he had realised. Desperate to stave off such a plan, Fr Garnet wrote to the Pope. But because he had learned of the plot through Fr Tesimond's confession, he could only broach the topic in the most general terms. As a result, the Pope's reply was similarly vague - and certainly not sufficient to dissuade Catesby from his plan.

But the involvement, however unwittingly, of Jesuit priests gave the authorities an easy scapegoat in the aftermath of the plot. Fr Garnet was tried and condemned to death by hanging, drawing and quartering. However, as he was hung, the crowd rushed forward and, seizing his legs, pulled him downwards, ensuring he died quickly rather than having to endure the further tortures of Jacobean execution. Garnet's head was stuck on a spike on London Bridge but when it remained fresh and incorrupt, the embarrassed authorities ordered it moved so that his face could no longer be seen.

However, the government propaganda against the Jesuits stuck. It's only recently that historians have realised that Fr Garnet and his Jesuit brothers attempted to forestall the Gunpowder Plot rather than encouraging it.

THE MONTEAGLE LETTER

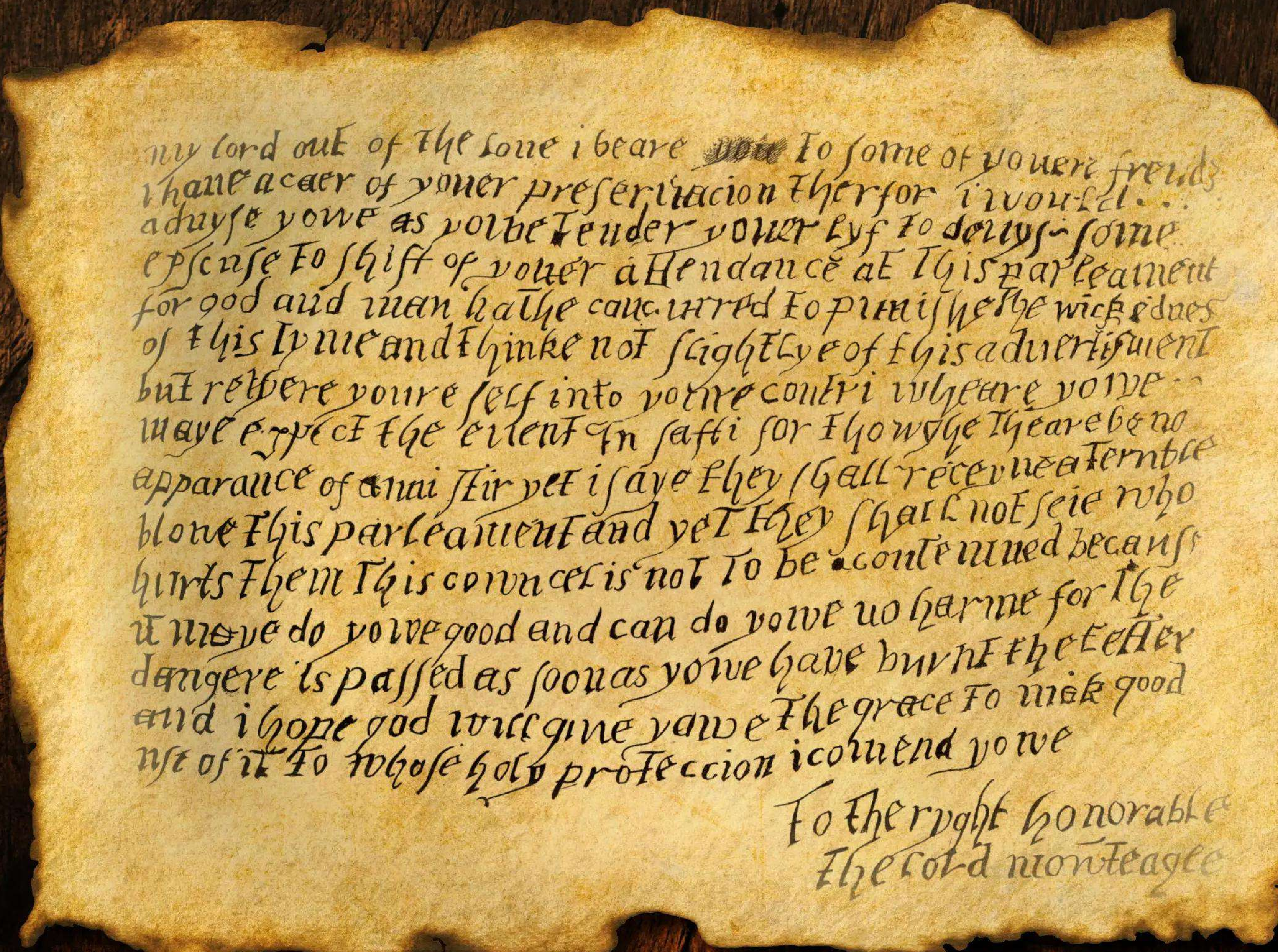
The Monteagle Letter changed the course of history, uncovering a conspiracy to kill and sending the men behind it to their deaths

On 26 October 1605, as William Parker, 4th Baron Monteagle, sat down to dine at his home in Hoxton, he was handed a letter that had been received anonymously. The letter warned Lord Monteagle, a Catholic member of the House of Lords, not to attend the opening of Parliament on 5 November, "for God and man hath concurred to punishe the wickedness of this tyme". The author ruminated darkly that "they shall receive a terrible blow this parliament" and urged the baron to take shelter at his country estate, where he would be safe. It closed with an instruction to burn the letter.

The letter was written in a disguised hand, presumably by a Catholic sympathiser, and was passed to Monteagle's footman in the street. Rather than leave London and follow the command to destroy the letter, the peer showed it to Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, who in turn took it to the monarch himself. The Privy Council then hatched a plan to catch the conspirators red-handed and on 4 November, Monteagle and Privy Counsellor Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk, descended into the undercroft of the House of Lords and soon discovered the brushwood which had been used to hide the gunpowder, and Guy Fawkes, claiming a flase name, guarding it. The plot was foiled.

Whoever lay behind the letter remains a mystery to this day. Monteagle was the brother-in-law of Francis Tresham, but had he written the letter, he would have known that Monteagle would likely report the letter. Given Tresham's commitment to the plot against the king, it's unlikely that he was the author. Another candidate, whose name has been associated with the letter for centuries, is Monteagle's sister, Mary Habington, though there is no direct evidence of her involvement. Some historians have even suggested that Monteagle learned of the plot from Tresham and then wrote the letter himself, hoping to use it to prevent the killings and curry favour with the king. Amongst their evidence they point to the fact that Monteagle was not the only Catholic due to be present in the House that day, but he was the only one to receive a letter warning him to stay away.

The mystery that surrounds the author of the Monteagle letter will likely never be solved. Yet whoever was behind it, it was one of the strands that unravelled the Gunpowder Plot, leading Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators to their gruesome fate.



my lord out of the loue i beare [illegible] To some of youere frends
i haue a caer of youer preseruacion therfor i would
aduyse yowe as yowe tender youer lyf to deuyse some
excuse to shift of youer attendance at This parleament
for god and man hathe concurred to punishe the wickednes
of this tyme and thinke not slightlye of this aduertisment
but retoere youre self into youre contri wheare yowe
maye expect the euent in safti for thowghe theare be no
apparance of anni stir yet i saye they shall receyue a terrible
blowe this parleament and yet they shall not seie who
hurts them this cowncel is not to be contemned because
it maye do yowe good and can do yowe no harme for the
dangere is passed as soon as yowe haue burnt the letter
and i hope god will giue yowe the grace to mak good
use of it to whose holy proteccion i comend yowe

To the ryght honorable
The lord mowteagle

"My lord, out of the love I bear to some of your friends, I have a care of your preservation, therefore I would advise you, as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift off your attendance at this Parliament, for God and Man have concurred to punish the wickedness of this time, and think not slightly of this advertisement but retire yourself into your country where you may expect the event in safety; for though there be no appearance of any stir, yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them: this counsel is not to be contemned, because it may do you good and can do you no harm, for the danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter, and I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it, to whose Holy Protection I commend you."

DISCOVERED

The Gunpowder Plot failed in spectacular style and when it did, the conspirators and their associates were hunted down and rounded up, ready to face their fates

After more than 12 months of planning, the Gunpowder Plot was finally to be put into effect on 5 November 1605. However, an anonymous letter delivered to Lord Monteagle in late October revealed that a murderous conspiracy was due to be carried out, leading to its discovery. Although the letter contained no specific details, its warning to the Catholic Monteagle to stay away from the State Opening of Parliament was enough to raise the suspicions of the authorities, A subsequent search of the parliamentary undercroft revealed not only the presence of Guy Fawkes, but matches, kindling, and barrels of gunpowder.

As news of the arrest of Guy Fawkes, who was operating under the pseudonym "John Johnson", spread across London, the remaining conspirators took flight. Guards clustered at the London city gates, the ports were closed and a mob descended on the house of the Spanish ambassador even as "John Johnson" continued to claim that he was acting alone. The authorities began rounding up anyone suspected of involvement, among them the servants of suspected plotter Ambrose Rookwood. Through these servants they learned the names of several of the other conspirators, who were by now on the run.

Rookwood, along with Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, Thomas Wintour and John and Christopher Wright, took refuge at Holbeche House, where they made a desperate last stand against the Sheriff of Worcester and his men on 7 November. Once the smoke had cleared, only Wintour, Rookwood and John Grant, who had been blinded by a gunpowder fire whilst on the run, were left alive. They would eventually be executed for their part in the plot, a fate that also befell Guy Fawkes and fellow conspirators Robert Keyes and Thomas Bates, who were captured within days of making a run for it. Robert Wintour and Stephen Lyttleton managed to survive two months on the run until they were betrayed by a servant of the Lyttleton family, resulting in their capture and eventual execution.

Francis Tresham decided to remain in London despite the others fleeing the city. He was arrested within the week. Everard Digby was the only conspirator to both surrender and enter a guilty plea. His requests for an audience with the king were denied and he was tried along with seven of his co-conspirators on 27 January 1606. All were to share the same fate: death.

"As news of the arrest of Guy Fawkes spread across London, the remaining conspirators took flight"

The discovery and arrest of Guy Fawkes sparked panic amongst the conspirators, who fled for their lives as the authorities sealed off London

Image Sources • Getty Images

THE LAST STAND

Faced with dwindling support, Catesby and the remaining plotters found themselves on the run and ready to fight to the death in the name of their cause

The plot had been discovered; the king was saved. But Robert Catesby – unaware his plans had been foiled – was ready to fulfil his destiny, and headed north to incite the uprising in the Midlands. News of Guy Fawkes' arrest reached Catesby from Ambrose Rookwood on the ride to Dunchurch, Warwickshire.

Spurred on by religious fervour, Catesby vowed to fight until the very last, desperately spreading false claims of James' assassination an in attempt to urge would-be rebels to take up arms and join him. However, despite his best efforts to rouse rebellion, Catesby had overestimated popular support. There proved to be little appetite amongst England's dormant Catholic community, who rightly sensed the folly of his cause.

Preparing for a final showdown, Catesby's men raided Warwick Castle and Hewell Grange for arms and fresh horses. With dwindling support, the plotters were now little more than fugitives on the run. Increasingly isolated, and sodden from the rain, even the weather transpired against them.

By 7 November, holed up at Holbeche House, the Staffordshire home of Stephen Lyttelton, exhaustion led to sloppiness. Damp gunpowder left to dry out by the fire caught alight from a stray spark, causing an explosion that left John Grant blinded, and Catesby and Rookwood suffering severe burns. At a time when divine providence meant everything, injury from their own gunpowder was a bitter irony and surely the clearest omen of God's rebuke.

Robert Wintour and Stephen Lyttelton fled into the night, eventually to be discovered following a servant's tip-off at nearby Hagley Hall. Meanwhile Digby also sloped off, later surrendering himself in the woods. This left the remaining plotters to face their fate at Holbeche. Martyrdom was now the only way out. The last stand took place on the morning of 8 November. The house was surrounded by a 200-strong militia, led by Sir Richard Walsh, the High Sheriff of Worcestershire. In the storm, the Wright brothers were shot down dead. Thomas Wintour, suffering a musket shot to the shoulder, was taken alive along with Grant, while Rookwood, also injured, was later captured. All three were sent to await their fate in the Tower.

Catesby vowed not to be taken alive, stating: "We mean here to die." True to his word, Catesby and Thomas Percy were felled by the very same musket ball by sharpshooter John Streete. Percy died instantly, but Catesby crawled back inside. His dead body was found with a gold cross around his neck and clutching the image of the Virgin Mary; his devout Catholicism expressed to the last.

"Spurred on by religious fervour, Catesby vowed to fight until the very last"

Image Source • Alamy

AFTERMATH OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

From torture and confessions to trial and executions, the fallout from the Gunpowder Plot was so severe that it affected state-Catholic relations for centuries

When Robert Catesby met with his co-conspirators in London's Duck and Drake inn on 20 May 1604 to discuss his idea to blow up Parliament and kill King James I, he would have been disheartened to know that his role in the outlandish scheme would be brought to an end by a musket shot in Staffordshire a year and a half later. With Thomas Percy and John and Christopher Wright suffering the same fate as Catesby, only nine of the original 13 plotters remained to face the consequences of the group's actions. Considering the horrific punishment most of them would be forced to endure, they might have wished they had died fighting alongside their companions. The backlash against the Gunpowder Plot didn't stop with them, however: news of the clandestine conspiracy gave rise to a new wave of anti-Catholic sentiment that swept through English society. The assassination attempt also resulted in legislation that made life even more restrictive for Catholics – the exact opposite of what the plot's organisers had wanted.

TAKEN TO THE TOWER

Those who survived the 8 November siege at Holbeche House were apprehended immediately, but it took a while for the authorities to round up all the perpetrators involved in the Gunpowder Plot. They arrested Francis Tresham in London on 12 November 1605 but weren't able to bring in Robert Wintour until 9 January the following year. He had managed to evade capture for nearly two months. Eventually, though, all the conspirators were taken to join Guy Fawkes in the capital city. The man who was in charge of lighting the fuse that would have obliterated Parliament had been imprisoned there since he was discovered beneath the House of Lords on the night of 4 November.

Thomas Bates was locked up in Gatehouse Prison due to his lower social status, but the other men were incarcerated with Fawkes in the Tower of London. In the days that followed his arrest, Fawkes admitted his involvement in the ploy to kill the King and underwent several rounds of agonising torture. Because his confessions implicated other members of the plot, they stood little chance of reprieve once they had been caught.

Interrogations continued for almost three months. Although no definitive evidence exists to prove that the other members of the conspiracy were tortured, the fact that they made confessions on various dates within that period suggests they probably were. One of the most significant declarations was made by Thomas Bates on 4 December 1605 when he attested to Father Oswald Tesimond's knowledge of the Gunpowder Plot. Bates would later regret his statement, but it gave investigators an excuse to target the priest and his Jesuit brethren. On 15 January 1606, the authorities issued an arrest warrant for some of England's Catholic clergy, which included Henry Garnet and John Gerard.

TRIAL AND SENTENCING

By the time the case went to trial, the brutal treatment and harsh conditions of their incarceration had taken a heavy toll on the detainees. Francis Tresham had expired (officially, of natural causes) on 23 December, a month before the eight surviving men were transported to Westminster Hall to face proceedings. The conspirators must have been a pitiful sight as they entered the court, but they would find no mercy.

Trial and sentencing took place on the same day: 27 January 1606. Though hidden, the king was present, as were some of his family. Members of Parliament and other high-ranking officials also sat in to watch events unfold. With no legal representation and the verdict having been decided beforehand, the fate of the plotters was assured. However, the prosecution also wanted to establish a link between the 5 November assassination attempt and the Jesuit clergy. After Sir Edward Philips read a

Guy Fawkes came close to killing the King, but 3 months later, he was put to death with his cohorts list of the accused crimes, including the attempt to kill the King and the plan to start a Catholic uprising, Attorney General Sir Robert Coke attacked the Jesuits directly:

"Now as this powder-treason is in itself prodigious and unnatural, so it is in the conception and birth most monstrous, as arising out of the dead ashes of former treasons. For it had three roots, all planted and watered by Jesuits and English Romish [sic] Catholics."

Coke's speech ensured that the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot would not end with the demise of the men on trial, but they still had to be sentenced. Apart from Everard Digby, all the conspirators had pleaded not guilty, and later in the day, each took their turn to speak. Some of them tried to explain their actions, while others begged for leniency. Despite their appeals, all eight were convicted of treason and would be subject to the same punishment: death by hanging, drawing and quartering. They also had to forfeit any land and property they owned to the Crown.

A GRUESOME DEATH

After sentencing, the men didn't have to wait long to be dealt with; the authorities scheduled their executions for the last two days of January 1606. The barbaric combination of hanging, drawing and quartering was a particularly painful and gruesome penalty saved for those convicted of the most heinous crimes. Each conspirator was to be bound to a wooden board and dragged by horses to his execution site, where the noose awaited. The man would then be hanged from the gallows and choked, but not until dead. After being cut down (and in some cases, while still conscious), he would have his genitals and innards removed. Finally, his head would be cut off and his body cleaved into pieces.

That was how the first of the conspirators to be executed - Everard Digby, Robert Wintour, John Grant and Thomas Bates - met their ends, at St Paul's Churchyard on 30 January. The next day, in front of a large and eager crowd at Westminster's Old Palace Yard, it was the turn of Thomas Wintour, Ambrose Rookwood, Robert Keyes and Guy Fawkes. Fawkes was the last man to be dispatched. For a while after his capture — before the interrogators broke him — he had tried to protect his companions by insisting that he acted alone in the plot to blow up Parliament, but as he ascended the gallows and drew his final few breaths, he did so with the irony of knowing that all twelve of his cohorts were already dead.

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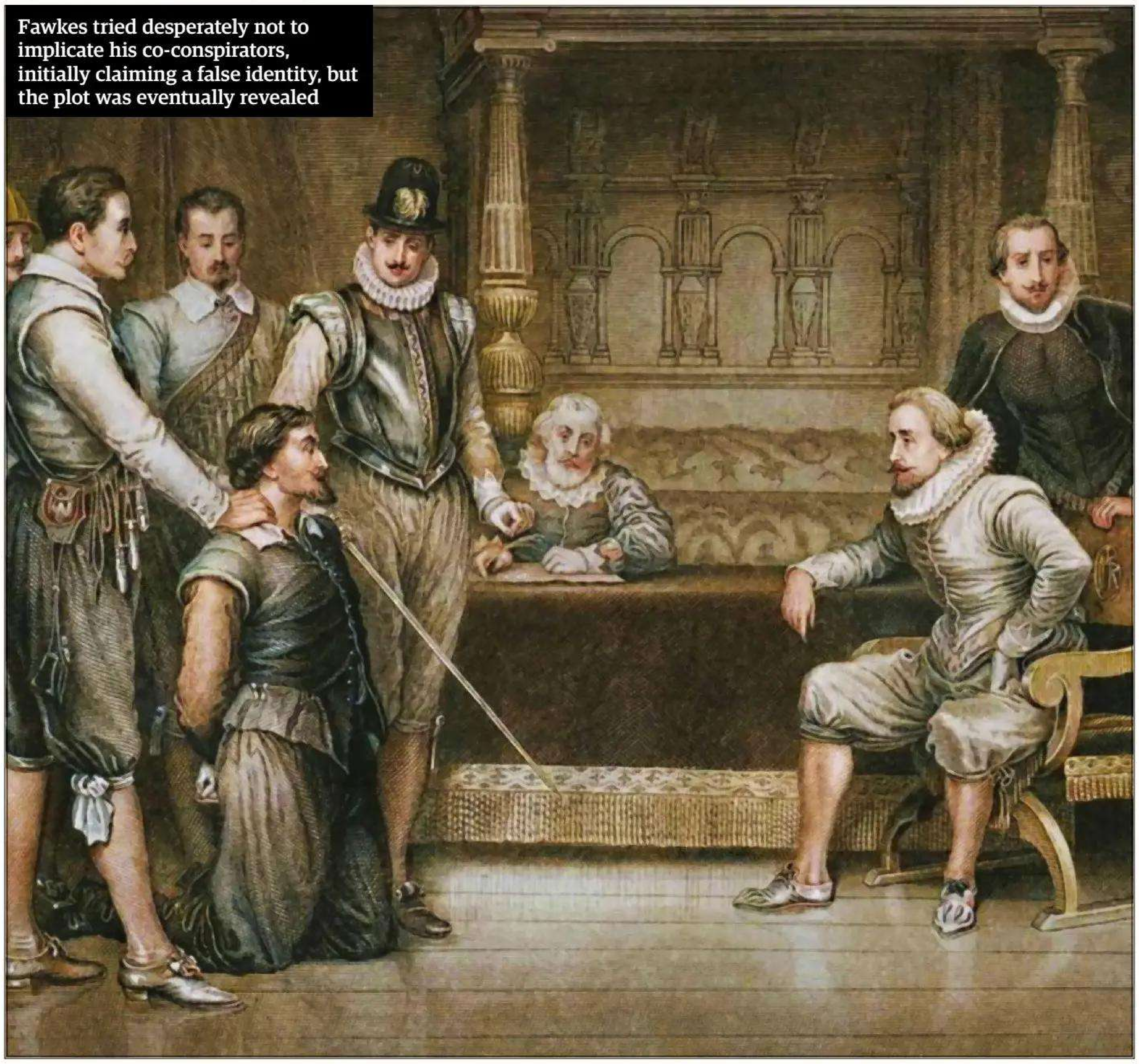
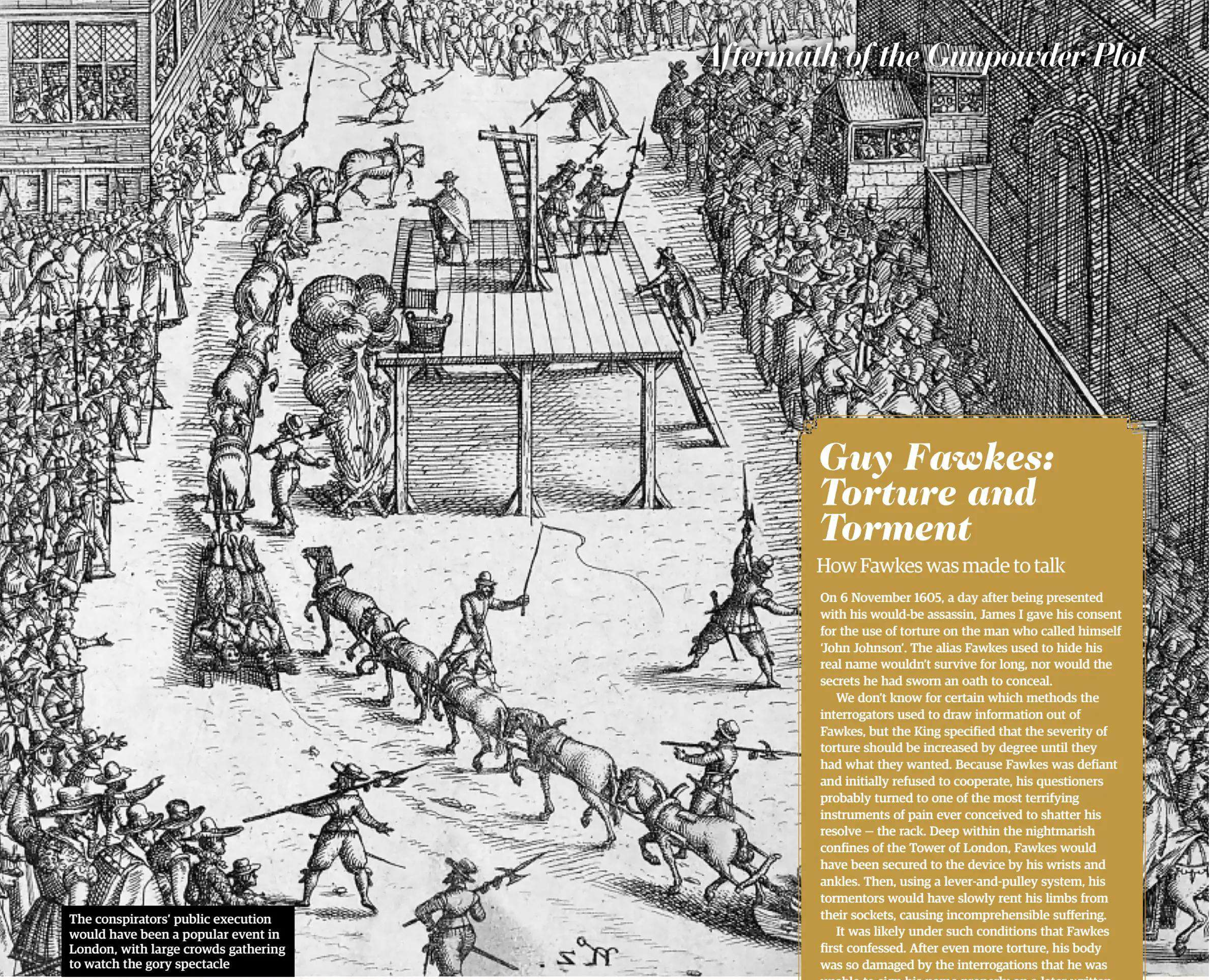
"Despite their appeals, all eight surviving conspirators were convicted of treason"



Fawkes tried desperately not to implicate his co-conspirators, initially claiming a false identity, but the plot was eventually revealed

The Tower of London housed the Gunpowder Plot conspirators



The conspirators' public execution would have been a popular event in London, with large crowds gathering to watch the gory spectacle

THE FALLOUT

With the last of the conspirators executed, the authorities drove home the warning that nothing good would come of attempted regicide or Catholic plotting by displaying their hacked-up remains across London. That even included the decapitated heads of Robert Catesby and Thomas Percy, whose bodies had been exhumed.

The state's response to the Gunpowder Plot was fierce and unrelenting. Refusing to rest with the capture of the main plotters, they continued to pursue anyone they thought might be connected to the affair, no matter how tenuous the link. Henry Mordaunt, Edward Stourton and the Earl of Northumberland were caught up in the blowback – all fined and imprisoned – but Father Henry Garnet fared worse. The Jesuit leader was arrested on 27 January 1606 and hanged, drawn and quartered on 3 May, even though he had tried to dissuade Robert Catesby from going ahead with his scheme. His fellow priests, John Gerard and Oswald Tesimond, were more fortunate, though; they escaped to Europe and lived into their early seventies. Despite the king acknowledging that the Gunpowder Plot was not the fault of all Catholics, the authorities' deliberate attempts to frame it as a 'Jesuit treason' had a huge effect on state-Catholic relations in the long term. New laws aimed at policing and persecuting the Catholic population ushered in more than two centuries of further restrictions, discrimination and suspicion.

In January 1606, Parliament decreed an official day of remembrance to mark the failure of the Gunpowder Plot. The Observance of 5 November Act 1605 set a legal precedent to commemorate the incident and established mandatory activities such as church services and the issuing of sermons. Some people celebrated by building bonfires and burning effigies of the Pope. As the backlash against Catholicism's perceived role in the plot settled down over the years, an effigy of Guy Fawkes would replace that of the Pope, and the annual tradition of Bonfire Night would become the more lighthearted commemoration that exists today.

Guy Fawkes: Torture and Torment

How Fawkes was made to talk

On 6 November 1605, a day after being presented with his would-be assassin, James I gave his consent for the use of torture on the man who called himself 'John Johnson'. The alias Fawkes used to hide his real name wouldn't survive for long, nor would the secrets he had sworn an oath to conceal.

We don't know for certain which methods the interrogators used to draw information out of Fawkes, but the King specified that the severity of torture should be increased by degree until they had what they wanted. Because Fawkes was defiant and initially refused to cooperate, his questioners probably turned to one of the most terrifying instruments of pain ever conceived to shatter his resolve – the rack. Deep within the nightmarish confines of the Tower of London, Fawkes would have been secured to the device by his wrists and ankles. Then, using a lever-and-pulley system, his tormentors would have slowly rent his limbs from their sockets, causing incomprehensible suffering.

It was likely under such conditions that Fawkes first confessed. After even more torture, his body was so damaged by the interrogations that he was unable to sign his name properly on a later written confession. Broken and bereft of hope, the only thing that awaited him was sentencing and death.

The Tower of London's rack was a diabolical contraption that could be used to elicit information from even the most resilient prisoners

Image Sources ✱ Alamy

REMEMBER, REMEMBER THE 5TH OF NOVEMBER

Take a look at the lasting remembrance of the Gunpowder Plot and the folkloric traditions associated with it

In 1626, while the memory of one of the most audacious acts of treason in history was still fresh, a young John Milton – then a scholar at Cambridge – composed an epic poem in Latin. Titled *In Quintum Novembris* ('On the 5th of November'), the poem by the man who would go on to become one of England'd greatest and most celebrated poets for his biblical epic *Paradise Lost*, included a short reference to the celebrations that followed the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot.

As time passed, other commemorative works, such as theatrical performances, combined with the legal requirement to celebrate the king's deliverance from attempted murder, helped to ensure that the infamous incident was never out of the public consciousness for long. However, it is a catchy verse from a simple folk rhyme that sticks with us most today: "Remember, remember the 5th of November." For more than four centuries, people in Britain have been doing just that. These days, 5 November is better known as 'Guy Fawkes Day' or 'Bonfire Night'. On cold, dark evenings on or close to the appointed date, families and friends leave the cosy confines of their homes and head out into the gloomy night. They make their way to parks and other communal spaces, where they huddle around huge pyramid-shaped bonfires to mark what happened all those years ago.

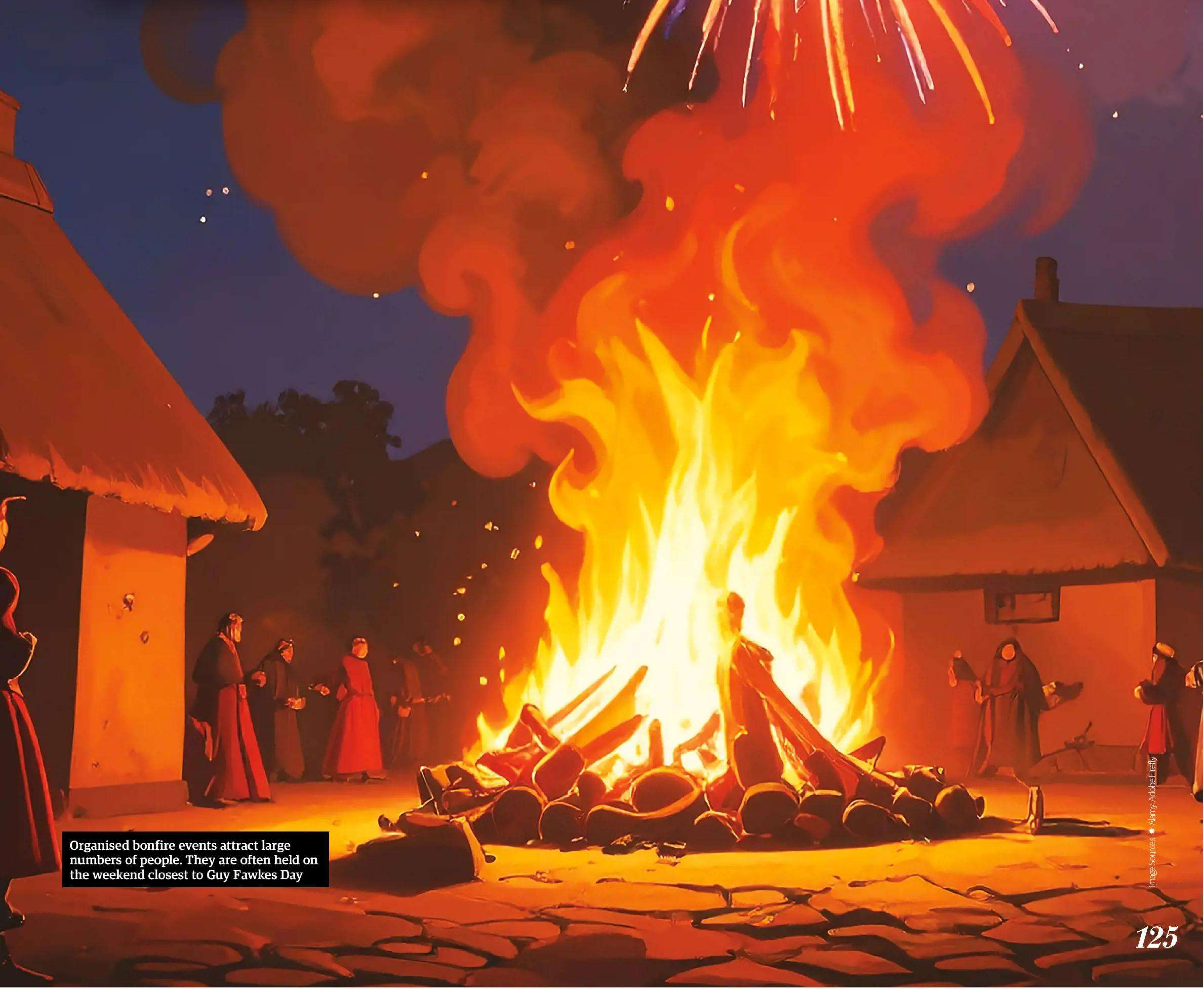
FUELLING TRADITION

The history of the bonfire tradition in the United Kingdom is enigmatic, but its origins probably lie somewhere within the smouldering embers of ancient pagan rituals. Long before the events of 1605, people had held sacred gatherings to honour the role that fire played in their lives, viewing it as a catalyst that could spark change and renewal.

The failure of the Gunpowder Plot gave the majority of the populace yet another reason to revel with fire; it also led to a new practice – 'Penny for the Guy'. In the run-up to Bonfire Night, children would use old clothing to make a mannequin of Guy Fawkes. They stuffed their 'Guy' with paper, rags or straw, then paraded it around their town while asking for "a penny for the Guy". When they had enough money, they bought fireworks and used wood they collected to build a fire. They then placed their 'Guy' on top of the fire, and set it alight. The custom has been in decline over recent decades; however, handmade versions of Guy Fawkes still decorate many community bonfires in November. Onlookers watch him get slowly consumed by the flickering flames as they enjoy firework displays and seasonal snacks like treacle toffee. They might not spend much of their evening thinking about the part he played in the Gunpowder Plot, but you can be sure that everybody knows who he was.

The most famous Gunpowder Plot commemoration takes place in the East Sussex town of Lewes, where bonfire societies arrange raucous processions

CLIFFE
LEWES



Organised bonfire events attract large numbers of people. They are often held on the weekend closest to Guy Fawkes Day

Image Sources ● Alamy, Adobe Firefly

WHAT IF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT HAD SUCCEEDED?

In the wake of an act of terror, Protestant vigilantes seek vengeance on their Catholic counterparts

What if the Gunpowder Plot had actually been successful?
Had the plot been successful the country's first major colonisation of the New World – the establishment of Jamestown in Virginia in 1607 – may never have happened. Perhaps the French or Spanish would have gotten there first. And had England failed to settle America, would we have then been in a position to colonise the West Indies? Without the profits generated from this colony, Britain might not have had the financial means to expand its horizons in the 19th century.
Had the British not settled America in the 17th century, would English be the global language it is today? Probably not. Perhaps we would now live in a world where French is the language of Hollywood and we in Britain would be the ones straining to read the subtitles on the big screen.

How close were Catesby and his co-conspirators to succeeding?
Given the fact that Guy Fawkes, along with his hoard of gunpowder, was discovered by the King's men just a few hours before the fuse was due to be lit, some might say that the plot came very close to succeeding. Further investigation, however, reveals a very different story. Before its dramatic conclusion in the early hours of 5 November 1605, the Gunpowder Plot had been in the planning stages for over 18 months. During this unusually long gestation period, the original five conspirators found it increasingly difficult to deflect suspicion and keep their scheme under wraps. As time went on, necessity forced them to reveal their plans to various friends and family members. On 26 October 1605, an anonymous letter was sent to one Lord Monteagle warning him not to attend the upcoming opening of Parliament as 'they shall receive a terrible blow this Parliament and yet they shall not see who hurts them.' Monteagle raised the alarm and the King was informed. The Gunpowder Plot was, thanks to this letter, discovered a full nine days previously.

What would blowing up the Houses of Parliament have done to the political landscape of the day?
Had the powder combusted properly and wiped out prominent members of the royal family and the country's political elite as planned, I doubt the country's political landscape would have greatly changed in the long term. Indeed, the fact that Catesby believed otherwise was naïve in the extreme. Common sense dictates that the powerful Protestant ruling families would surely have hunted down the perpetrators, while Protestant vigilantes, galvanised by the act of terror inflicted on their fellow men in Westminster, would have sought revenge against ordinary Catholic civilians. If anything, a successful Gunpowder Plot would have made life worse for English Catholics, not better.

How do you think British Catholics would have reacted to the untimely death of the Protestant James I?
The majority of 17th-century Catholics would have viewed Catesby's actions in the same way Northern Irish Catholics reacted to the murderous campaigns of the IRA during the Troubles – that is, with abhorrence. Also, it's worth pointing out that James was not uniformly despised by the Catholic community; many still held out hope that he would be persuaded to lessen the restrictions placed on the Roman religion by his predecessors. After all, his mother was the Catholic martyr, Mary Queen of Scots. Protestants would have been outraged by the regicide, and I believe many would have taken the law into their own hands in an attempt to exact revenge. It's not difficult to envisage an eruption of anti-Catholic riots throughout the country.

Nous le peuple des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution
Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted
Section 2. The House of Representatives

> *"Would English be the global language it is today? Probably not. Perhaps we would now live in a world where French is the language of Hollywood"*

Interview with *Sinead Fitzgibbon*

Sinead Fitzgibbon is an Irish author and writer whose published history books include *A Short History of London*, *The Queen: History in an Hour* and *The Gunpowder Plot: History in an Hour*. She graduated with a degree in economics, working in investment banking in Sydney, Australia for six years before returning to the UK to pursue a career as a writer in 2007. She has a particular interest in art, literature and of course, history.

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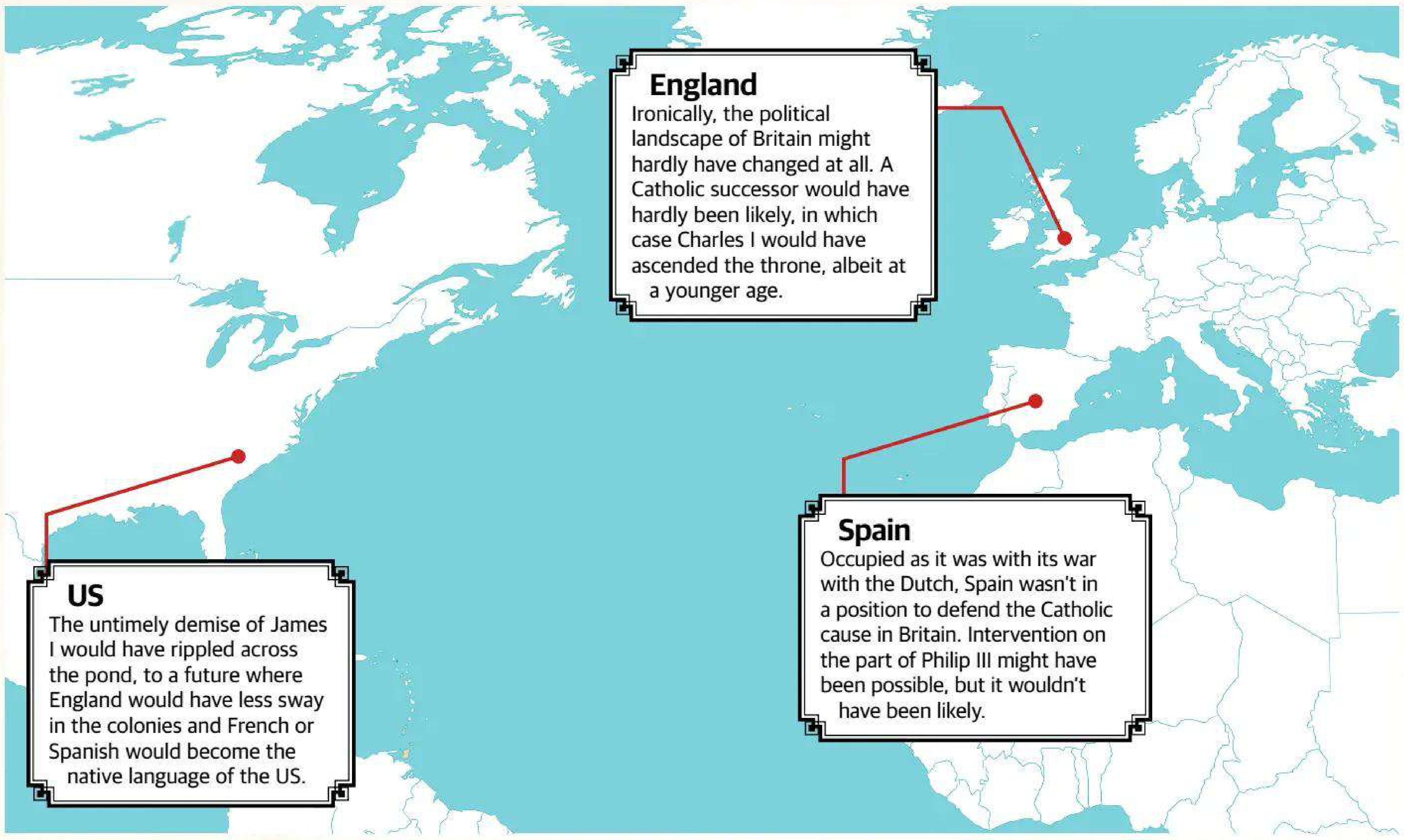


England
Ironically, the political landscape of Britain might hardly have changed at all. A Catholic successor would have hardly been likely, in which case Charles I would have ascended the throne, albeit at a younger age.

Spain
Occupied as it was with its war with the Dutch, Spain wasn't in a position to defend the Catholic cause in Britain. Intervention on the part of Philip III might have been possible, but it wouldn't have been likely.

US
The untimely demise of James I would have rippled across the pond, to a future where England would have less sway in the colonies and French or Spanish would become the native language of the US.

How do you think the assassination of James I would have affected Britain's relationship with other countries?
By the 17th century, relations between Protestant Britain and Catholic Spain had been strained for decades. Tensions had begun to escalate during the initial stages of the Reformation when Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon [daughter of Spain's Ferdinand and Isabella], and had peaked with the failed invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588. Even after 1588, some English Catholics continued to hope that the Spanish would one day succeed in overthrowing the country's Protestant rulers. This intervention never materialised, thanks in large part to the strain imposed on Spain's military resources by the Dutch wars. It's difficult to say how Spain would have reacted had Catesby's scheme borne fruit. Perhaps it would have tipped the balance in favour of the longed-for Spanish intervention. Maybe Philip III would have sought to capitalise on the plotters' triumph by attempting to install himself or a member of his family on the English throne - after all, his sister, Isabella, had once been touted by some prominent English Catholics as a possible successor to Elizabeth I. But while this scenario was possible, I don't believe it was very probable. By this point in the proceedings, Spain had largely abandoned English Catholics to their fate - indeed, the court of Philip III had previously declined to offer Catesby any assistance in his quest to mount a rebellion.

More broadly, I think the Gunpowder Plot would have had a significant impact on Britain's relations with the wider world, in that Catesby's scheme may well have put paid to the country's early colonial ambitions.

James I was first and foremost a Scottish king - if the assassination had succeeded how would Scotland have reacted?
This is an interesting point to consider. James had been Scotland's monarch for 35 years before succeeding Elizabeth I to the throne in 1603. And given that Scottish Calvinists had gone to great lengths to install James as king in the first place, I doubt they would have taken his assassination lightly. A Scottish invasion of England may well have been the result.

Who would have been the most likely successor to James I if a Catholic monarch was placed on the throne?
In a bid to add legitimacy to his coup, it was Catesby's intention to install James and Anne's nine-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, on the throne as a puppet monarch. Catholic guardians would have been appointed to oversee her re-education in the Roman faith, while a regent would look after affairs of state until she came of age. She would then have been married off to a Catholic prince from one of Europe's royal dynasties, re-establishing a Catholic line of succession. Again, this was a very ill-conceived plan, as it was unlikely Princess Elizabeth would have been as pliable and cooperative as Catesby hoped.

What if James I had died but the Protestants retained control - who would have been crowned then?
James's eldest son, Henry, was due to attend the opening of Parliament along with his parents on the fateful day. Assuming he too had been killed, the next in line to the throne was the youngest son, Charles [Elizabeth would have been precluded from the line of succession thanks to the laws of male primogeniture]. Just as Catesby had planned with Elizabeth, the Protestant establishment would have

How would it be different?

Real timeline

1533

English Reformation
King Henry VIII takes control of the church in England and, as head of the Church of England, oversees the persecution of the Catholics that refuse to convert to Protestantism.
1533-1540

Elizabeth I crowned queen
There's no relief for the Catholics after Henry VIII's death: his daughter, Elizabeth I, is crowned Queen and imposes severe penalties for anyone caught practising the Catholic faith.
1558

A new king
The queen dies, leaving no heir after reigning through years of religious divide in England. A Protestant, James VI of Scotland, is appointed King of England.
1603

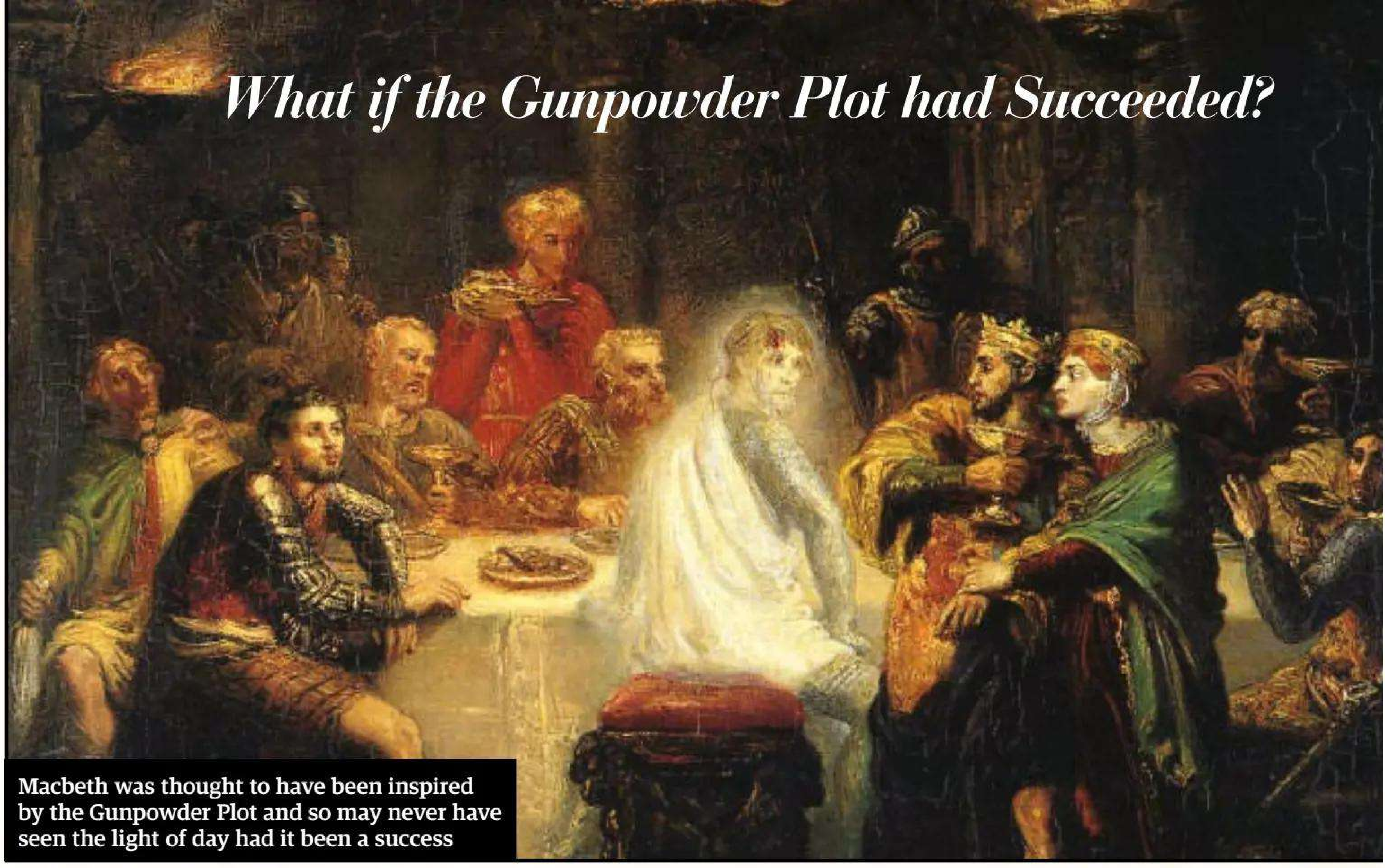
A moderate king
The new king, now James I of England, preferred to exile the religious lawbreakers rather than torture and execute them, but some English Catholics were not to be mollified so easily.
1603-1605

The plotters meet
Robert Catesby and four of his co-conspirators (Thomas Wintour, John Wright, Guy Fawkes and Thomas Percy) make their plans and swear an oath of secrecy in the Duck and Drake Inn, London.
20 May 1604

Undercroft Access
By luck the undercroft beneath the Houses of Parliament are up for lease. The conspirators purchase the lease and begin to move 36 barrels of gunpowder into it over the next few months.
1605

Real timeline

Alternate timeline



Macbeth was thought to have been inspired by the Gunpowder Plot and so may never have seen the light of day had it been a success

looked after the boy's, and indeed the country's interests until he reached the age where he could rule in his own right.

What effect would either outcome have had on the lineage of Britain?

In the case of Charles, there would have been no impact on the future line of succession, as he was destined to take the throne anyway. In 1612, he became heir apparent when his older brother, Prince Henry, died of suspected typhoid fever [Charles eventually succeeded his father to the throne on the latter's death in 1625].

It is less clear what would have happened to the line of succession had Catesby succeeded in his plan to install Princess Elizabeth as monarch. Would Charles have tried to oust his sister once he came of age? Possibly. Perhaps Elizabeth would have willingly abdicated in favour of her brother, given he was the rightful heir.

We shall never know. Elizabeth was, however, to leave her mark on England's royal lineage. When the House of Stuart eventually gave way to the House of Hanover [childlessness having done what a revolution, a beheading, and an abdication had failed to do], it was Elizabeth's grandson, George I, who became the first Hanoverian king. There's a pleasing synchronicity in that, wouldn't you say?

Besides James I, there were some notable historic figures present in the Houses of Parliament on the day. What would the knock-on effect of these collateral deaths have had on the history books?

Had the architects of the Gunpowder Plot achieved their aims, the untimely death of Francis Bacon would have been a significant loss to posterity. A polymath who wrote prolifically, his works greatly influenced the development of philosophical, scientific, and legal thinking. The biggest loser, however, would have been our English language. Both James VI and Bishop Bancroft had a part to play in the compilation of the King James Version of the Bible (KJV), which was destined to form part of the bedrock on which our modern language is built. Although work had started on the KJV in 1604, it wasn't finished until 1611, and you could argue that the project might never have reached completion had these two men perished in November 1605.

The other great contributor to our language was, of course, William Shakespeare. It is sobering to consider that, without the patronage of King James [who funded Shakespeare's acting company, The King's Men], some of the greatest works of dramatic tragedy may never have been written.

Certainly *Macbeth*, written in 1606 and widely thought to have been inspired by the Gunpowder Plot, may never have seen the light of day - because, as the contemporary writer Sir John Harington famously said, "Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason? Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason."

What would Britain have been like today, politically and religiously?

When all is said and done, I don't believe Protestantism would have been supplanted had the Houses of Parliament gone up in flames on that November day in 1605. I think the country's Protestant majority would have scuppered Catesby's plans, and Charles would have succeeded his father to the English and Scottish thrones. Puritanism may have flourished as a reaction to the atrocity, and perhaps Oliver Cromwell would never have had his day in the sun. From a global perspective, the picture may well have been very different. Had the political upheaval resulting from a successful Gunpowder Plot diverted attentions away from colonial expansion, the British Empire may never have got off the ground. It is entirely feasible to suggest that country might never have become a major player on the world stage; instead it may have been destined to play second fiddle in a French or Spanish-speaking world. In short, Great Britain might never have achieved the requisite degree of greatness to justify its lofty name.

Anonymous tip-off
Lord Monteagle receives an anonymous letter begging him not to go to the opening of Parliament on that fateful day. It proves to be key evidence in revealing the plot to the King.
26 October 1605

The discovery
With knowledge of the plot, the undercroft is searched the evening before Parliament's opening. Guy Fawkes is discovered hiding there with 36 barrels of gunpowder, ready to light the fuse.
4 November 1605

Capture and arrest
Over the next few days, the plotters are rounded up, arrested and interrogated. Following trial, they're hung, drawn and quartered – a particularly horrific form of execution reserved for traitors.
8 November 1605

Jamestown settled
The Virginia company of London reaches the east coast of America, where a permanent settlement is established – Jamestown – that lasts as the colony's capital for nearly a century.
14 May 1607

Declaration of Independence
Britain's hold on the American colonies reaches breaking point as an agreement is signed and a union is formed under one proposed nation: the Unites States of America.
1776

US
After a century of war, the fledgling nation expands and prospers to the world power it is today. Britain's own fortunes wane as its empire diminishes, but English is an international language.
1776-present day

Anonymous tip-off
Lord Monteagle receives an anonymous letter, but decides to keep its contents to himself. He makes his excuses to avoid Parliament on its fateful opening day.
26 October 1605

Parliament destroyed
Amid the opening of the Houses of Parliament, there is a huge explosion from the undercroft beneath it. King James I as well as a host of dignitaries are killed.
5 November 1605

English uprising
Inspired by the plotters, Catholics in many quarters rebel against the Protestants and, despite Charles I taking the throne, Britain is caught up in religious conflict.
1605-1606

America colonised
The first major colonies of America are established by the French and Spanish. The War for Independence is fought between the colonists and the old-world countries.
1607-1766

The world stage
Britain never becomes a superpower as it isn't involved in the land-grab of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. French and Spanish are the dominant languages of the modern-day US.
1766-Present day

Image Sources ✱ Wikipedia, Alamy

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REMEMBER, REMEMBER, THE 5TH OF NOVEMBER,
GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT.
I SEE NO REASON
WHY GUNPOWDER TREASON
SHOULD EVER BE FORGOT.
GUY FAWKES, GUY FAWKES, ‘TWAS HIS INTENT
TO BLOW UP THE KING AND THE PARLIAMENT
THREE SCORE BARRELS OF POWDER BELOW
POOR OLD ENGLAND TO OVERTHROW
BY GOD’S PROVIDENCE HE WAS CATCH’D
WITH A DARK LANTERN AND BURNING MATCH
HOLLER BOYS, HOLLER BOYS, LET THE BELLS RING
HOLLER BOYS, HOLLER BOYS
GOD SAVE THE KING!

*

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

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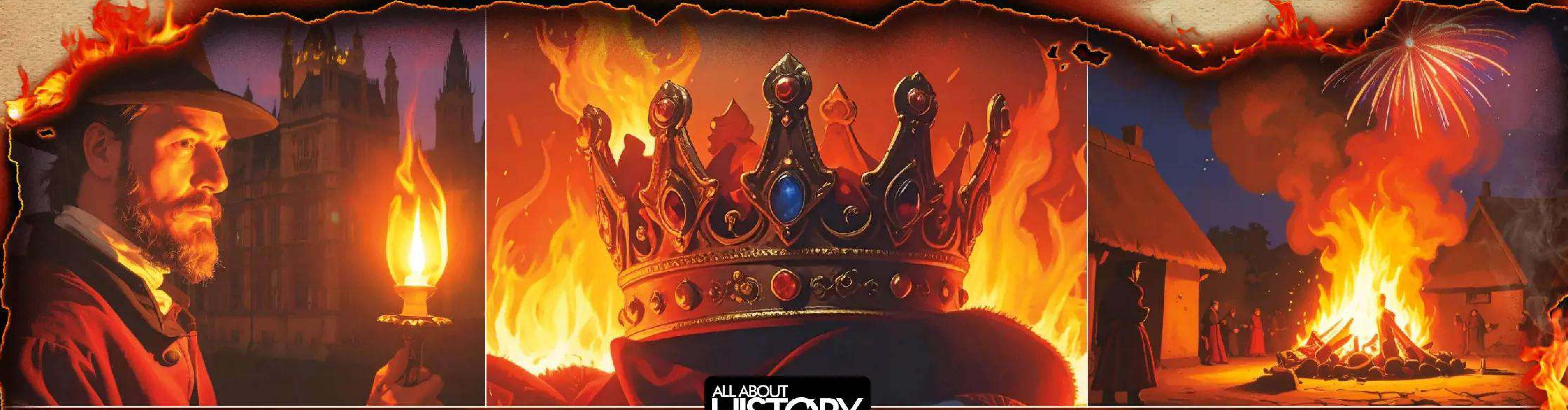
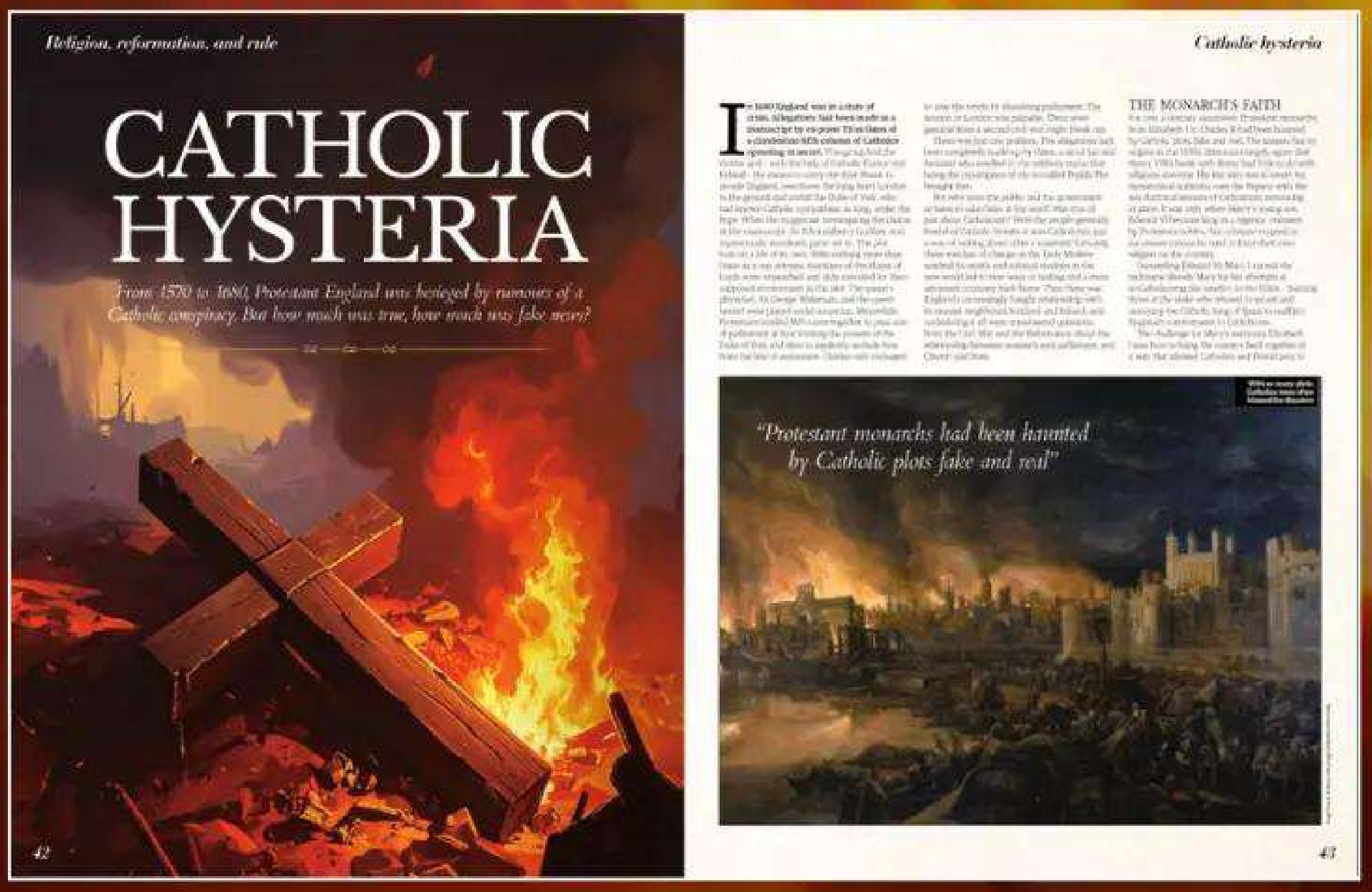


ALL ABOUT HISTORY

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

DISCOVER THE TREASONOUS SCHEME TO KILL A KING AND HIS MINISTERS



Religion, reformation, and rule

CATHOLIC HYSTERIA

From 1570 to 1680, Protestant England was besieged by rumours of a Catholic conspiracy. But how much was true, how much was fake news?

Catholic hysteria

THE MONARCH'S FAITH

"Protestant monarchs had been haunted by Catholic plots fake and real"

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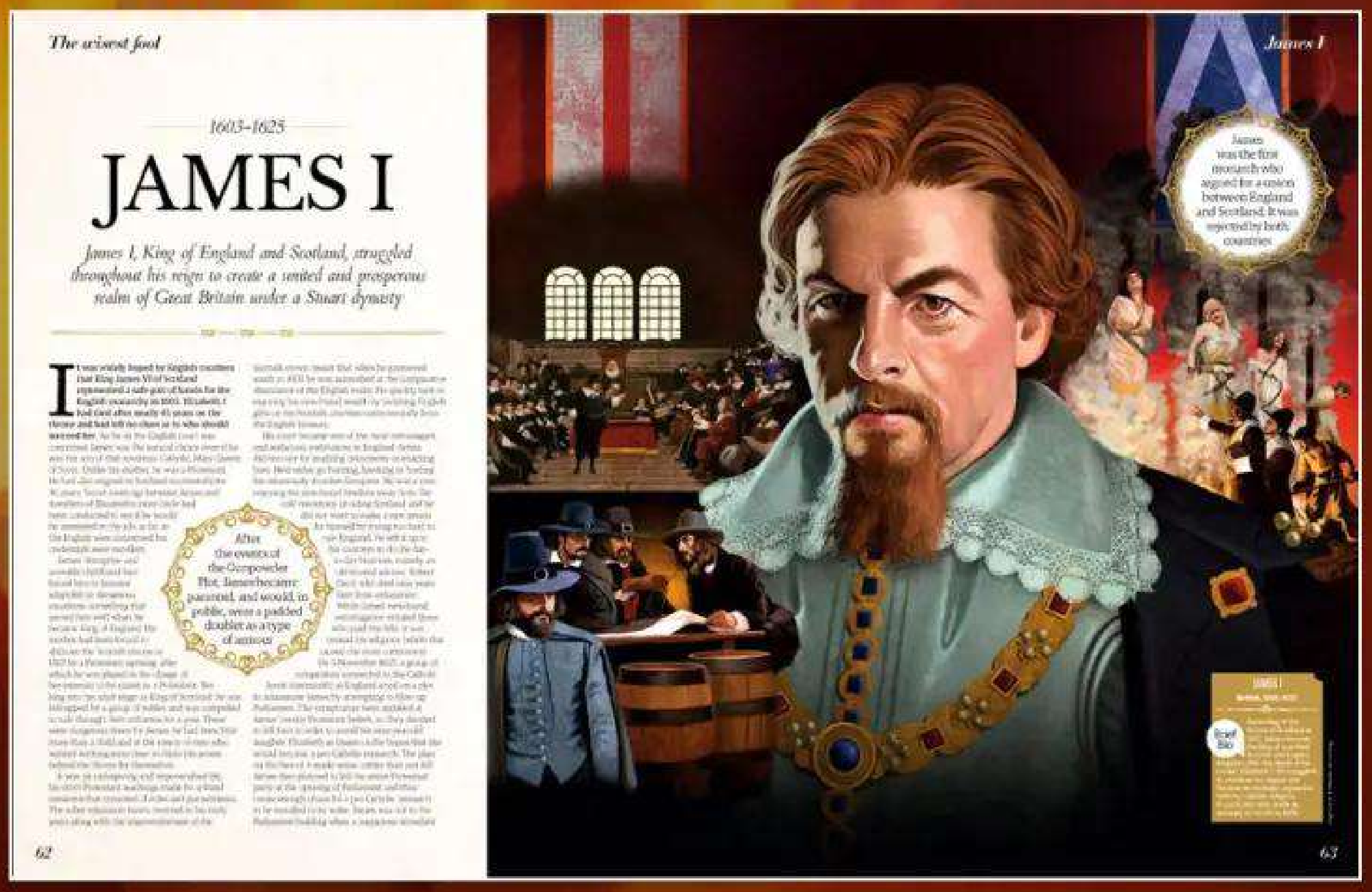
REBELS REVEALED

Discover why Britain's Catholics were persecuted and what they did about it



The wisest fool

1603–1625

JAMES I

James I, King of England and Scotland, struggled throughout his reign to create a united and prosperous realm of Great Britain under a Stuart dynasty

After the events of the Gunpowder Plot, James became paranoid, and would, in public, wear a padded doublet as a type of armour

James I

James was the first monarch who argued for a union between England and Scotland. It was rejected by both countries

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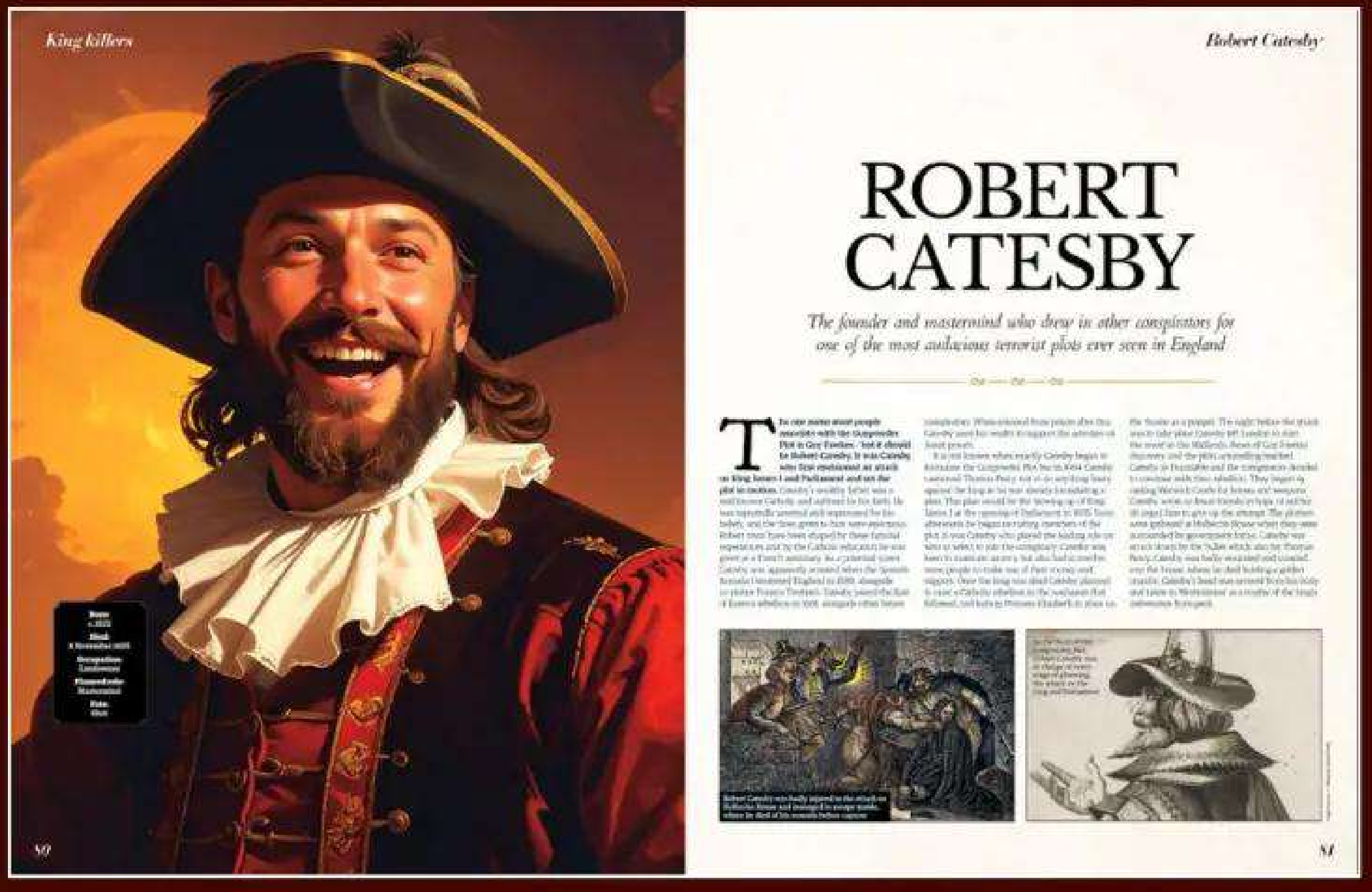
TO KILL A KING

Explore the reasons why King James became a target for hatred



King killers

Robert Catesby

ROBERT CATESBY

The founder and mastermind who drew in other conspirators for one of the most audacious terrorist plots ever seen in England

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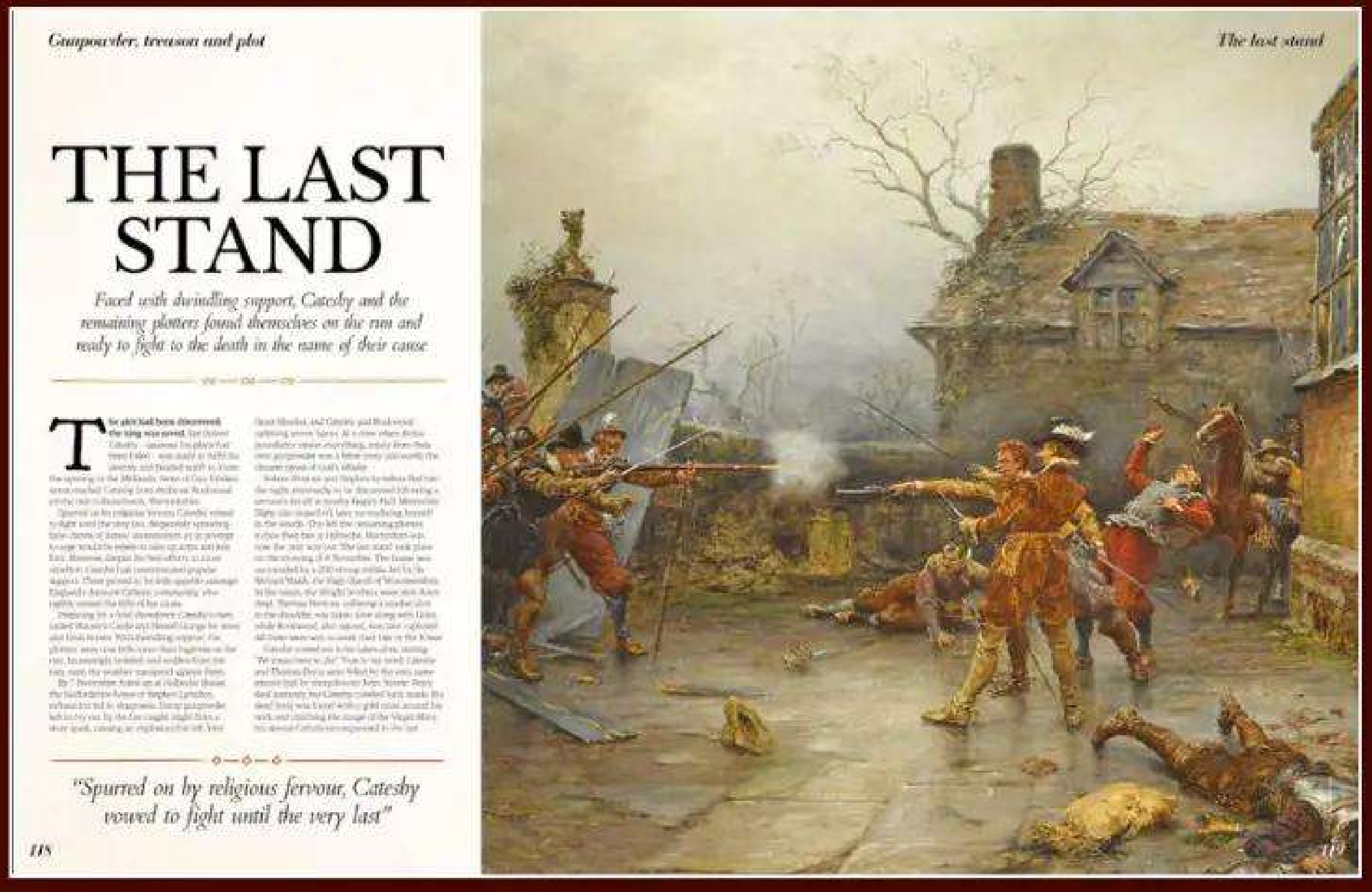
PLOTTERS UNVEILED

Unmask the real power behind the plot and discover the men who planned it



Gunpowder, treason and plot

THE LAST STAND

Faced with dwindling support, Catesby and the remaining plotters found themselves on the run and ready to fight to the death in the name of their cause

"Spurred on by religious fervour, Catesby vowed to fight until the very last"

The last stand

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THE PLOT IN ACTION

Witness an in-depth account of the Gunpowder Plot and its aftermath

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